

(Re)presenting Perpetration:

On the Thematization of World War II Perpetration at Dutch Sites of Memory



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Introduction

Walking on the grounds of former Nazi transit camp Westerbork, not many original material traces of the camp can be found. After having been used for several different purposes, the camp was demolished in the 1970s to accommodate for the new Westerbork Synthesis Radio Telescope. While over the years, several memorials have been placed and efforts have been made to bring back the outlines of the camp and its buildings, the only original building that is left standing is a house just outside the border of the camp. During most of the war period (between October 1942 and April 1945), this house was occupied by the camp's commander, Albert Konrad Gemmeker. Afterwards, it was occupied by the family Van der Speck Obreen until 2007, which is why it was spared from demolition in the beginning of the 1970s. Since June 1994 the house has been a national monument. When in 2007 the last occupant passed away, it was left empty by *Staatsbosbeheer* (the organisation that cares for the green heritage of the Netherlands). In 2010, *Staatsbosbeheer* gave the house to the Memorial Centre camp Westerbork for long lease and a year later the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport subsidised the Memorial Centre to allow it to renovate and make an effort to conserve the house, which was realised in 2015. To be able to conserve the wooden house, a large glass construction has been placed over it.¹ Not everyone was pleased with this situation. In 2011, when Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork got subsidised, *Trouw* published an article with the telling title "*Vught is jaloers op subsidie Westerbork*" (*Vught is Jealous of Subsidies Westerbork*). At the time, Camp Vught National Memorial also had an original building that needed renovation; the only prisoner barracks of the Netherlands that has not been moved elsewhere or demolished, barracks 1B. However, the Ministry decided to refrain from subsidising this renovation, because it does not subsidise 'stones'. According to Henk Smeets, chair of foundation *Barak 1B*, who was interviewed for the article, it seemed as if perpetrator

¹ Hans Praamstra and Boukje Zeinstra, *Bestemmingsplan Kamp Westerbork: Toelichting*, 6 July 2017, 10-1, accessed March 17, 2018, https://www.planviewer.nl/imro/files/NL.IMRO.1731.KampWesterbork-VST1/t_NL.IMRO.1731.KampWesterbork-VST1.pdf.

heritage was more important than victim heritage.² When in 2015 the construction was finished, *de Volkskrant* published an article called “*Megavitrine Westerbork is duur en onnodig*” (Huge Glass Case Westerbork is Expensive and Unnecessary), in which the author claims that the glass construction around the house only distracts from the important story (that of the victims) to be told at the site.³

The situation described above is indicative of a broader shift within the Dutch memory culture of the Second World War. As the authors of the articles in *Trouw* and *de Volkskrant* implicitly indicate, the focus of sites of memory such as Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork, Camp Vught National Memorial, but also National Monument Camp Amersfoort has been on victims: through memorials, exhibitions, commemorations and other activities the story of the victims of the Nazi regime gets told. Yet, in 2011 Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork got government money to renovate and conserve a house that is clearly perpetrator heritage, as it was occupied by the camp commander. This shift towards the inclusion of perpetrators in more complicated narratives of the war is still ongoing and has not been without struggle. In this context, this thesis will focus on answering how three major World War II memorial sites in the Netherlands (National Monument Camp Amersfoort, Camp Vught National Memorial, and Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork) thematise their perpetrator history in their exhibitions and on the former campsites. In the introduction, I will first present an elaborate state of the art. I will give a theoretical background by considering the different perpetrator groups and their image created in memory culture. Moreover, I will trace the developments in perpetrator studies, both the broader developments and those specific to the Netherlands. This historical background provides the framework for my thesis. Lastly, in this introduction, I will elaborate on the research question and methods.

² George Marlet, “Vught is jarloers op subsidie Westerbork,” *Trouw*, February 9, 2011, accessed March 9, 2018, <https://www.trouw.nl/home/vught-is-jarloers-op-subsidie-westerbork~a88deabc/>.

³ Erik Schilp, “Megavitrine Westerbork is duur en onnodig,” *de Volkskrant*, February 7, 2015, accessed March 9, 2018, www.lexisnexis.com/uk/nexis. It must be said that three days earlier *de Volkskrant* also published a more neutral toned article on the glass construction.

First we need a more detailed description of who the perpetrators are and a complication of what perpetration is. According to Raul Hilberg, there are three groups that can be distinguished: victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. According to him:

The perpetrators were people who played a specific role in the formulation or implementation of anti-Jewish measures. In most cases, a participant understood his function, and he ascribed it to his position and duties. What he did was impersonal. He had been empowered or instructed to carry out his mission. . . . The work was diffused in a widespread bureaucracy, and each man could feel that his contribution was a small part of an immense undertaking. For these reasons, an administrator, clerk, or uniformed guard never referred to himself as a perpetrator.⁴

I think that today, this definition is often complicated in the sense that it is not so easy to pinpoint who is a perpetrator, bystander or victim. Moreover, who was once a victim, might later be a perpetrator, or vice versa. This said, in the Netherlands, perpetration during World War II is not limited to the German occupier. A considerable number of Dutch people collaborated with the occupier. For instance, there were many members of the NSB (Dutch National Socialist Movement), which was the only legal political party during most of the war. In addition, other people that were involved in the persecution of the Jews include people turning in their Jewish neighbours, war profiteers, or civil servants such as members of the Dutch police.⁵ Moreover, historian Frank van Riet shows in *De bewakers van Westerbork* (The Guards of Westerbork, 2016), that a group of perpetrators, in the case of his book the guards of Westerbork, is not necessarily homogenous. Van Riet describes several groups of guards, such as the SS, but also the Royal Netherlands Military Police, and the *ordedienst*, which was already set up when the camp was still for refugees and consisted of both Dutch and German Jews (the OD was responsible for the order in the camp). One of van Riet's conclusions is that the German camp commanders needed only very few German SS to be able to run the camp, because most of the guards were Dutch.⁶

⁴ Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993), ix.

⁵ See: Ad van Liempt, *Jodenjacht: De onthutsende rol van de Nederlandse politie in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2011).

⁶ Frank van Riet, *De bewakers van Westerbork* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2016).

The variety of perpetrators and their motives complicates the story. We cannot rightly speak of 'the good Dutch people against the evil Germans' or the 'evil people from the NSB and the good Dutch citizen.'

Yet, historian Erik Schumacher notes that this is what happened until the 1990s. In the Netherlands, only since then collaboration has been researched and thematised in museums. Before that, the image sketched of perpetrators (both Dutch and German) was rather one-dimensional; they were either psychologically unstable or simply opportunists.⁷ This shift is influenced by a process called the 'dynamics of memory,' which is defined by several different scholars. For example, historians Frank van Vree and Rob van der Laarse define the 'dynamics of memory', as "a process of continuous change in interpretation and signification, during which different aspects and events are brought forward and the image of history in museums, novels, films, education, commemorative rituals, and heritage sites are being redesigned."⁸ It can be seen as a process of inclusion and exclusion: what do we deem worthy enough to remember?⁹ Memory studies scholars Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney have a definition that likewise focuses on reconfiguring one's "relationship to the past", but add to van Vree and van der Laarse's definition that this process of reconfiguring happens because of "an ongoing process of remembrance and forgetting".¹⁰ Remembering, they state, "is better seen as an active engagement with the past, as performative rather than

⁷ Erik Schumacher, "Oog in oog met de collaborateur," *Onderzoek Uitgelicht* 6, no. 1 (2017): 9, accessed January 6, 2018, <https://www.4en5mei.nl/onderzoek/uitgelicht/jaargang-6-nummer-1>. According to Madelon de Keizer and Marije Plomp, the research only really started after the turn of the millennium. Madelon de Keizer and Marije Plomp, introduction to *Een open zenuw: Hoe wij ons de Tweede Wereldoorlog herinneren* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010), 17.

⁸ Frank van Vree and Rob van der Laarse, introduction to *De dynamiek van de herinnering: Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog in een internationale context* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009), 8. Original: "een proces van voortdurende verandering in interpretatie en betekenisgeving, waarbij telkens andere aspecten en gebeurtenissen naar voren worden gehaald en het beeld van de geschiedenis in musea, romans, films, het onderwijs, herdenkingsrituelen en erfgoed sites opnieuw wordt vormgegeven."

⁹ Vree and Laarse, *De dynamiek van de herinnering*, 12.

¹⁰ Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney. "Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics," in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 2.

as reproductive.”¹¹ Similar to Erll and Rigney, Aleida Assmann notes that remembering means forgetting: there is no way we can remember everything.¹² Therefore, to remember one thing, we need to either *actively* (throwing things away, destroying them, etc.) or *passively* (storing something, losing it, abandoning it, etc.) forget other things. Perpetration, especially one’s own role in perpetration, is one of these things to forget, because with perpetration usually comes guilt and shame, which “threaten and shatter the construction of a positive self-image.”¹³ Nationally, therefore, a history of perpetration is difficult to “be integrated into the semantics of a heroic or martyriological narrative.”¹⁴ The anthropologist Paul Connerton calls this ‘humiliated silence,’ which is one of the seven types of forgetting he distinguishes. Basically, this is silence caused by shame and is manifest in civil society as a whole as what almost feels like a conspiracy to keep quiet about certain histories.¹⁵ A society may *purposefully* silence part of their past in order to forget it, which is what happened in the Netherlands and elsewhere until approximately the 1990s.

War museums are in constant conversation with memory culture. On the one hand, museums are looking for ways to respond to it, on the other hand they can themselves be

¹¹ Erll and Rigney, “Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics,” 2. The NWO (The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research) recently funded a project called The Dynamics of Memory (*Dynamiek van de herinnering*) which researched the dynamics of memory regarding World War II in the Netherlands. The program resulted in several books. See for example Vree and Laarse, *Dynamiek van de herinnering*; Kees Ribbens and Esther Captain, *Tonen van de Oorlog: Toekomst voor het museale erfgoed van de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: NIOD, 2011), accessed 18-12-2017, <https://www.niod.nl/nl/tonen-van-de-oorlog>; Erik L.M. Somers, *De oorlog in het museum: Herinnering en verbeelding* (Zwolle: Wbooks, 2014).

¹² Aleida Assmann, “Canon and Archive,” in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 97.

¹³ Aleida Assmann, “Memory, Individual and Collective,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 218.

¹⁴ Assmann, “Memory, Individual and Collective,” 218.

¹⁵ Paul Connerton, “Seven Types of Forgetting,” *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 67, accessed March 12, 2018, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1750698007083889>.

a guide for memory culture.¹⁶ In 2011 the NIOD published the book *Tonen van de oorlog*, written by Kees Ribbens and Esther Captain, as part of the NWO research project 'Dynamics of Memory'. Mostly, the book is meant to be a stimulant for war and memorial museums to rethink how they want to thematise World War II with the help of heritage.¹⁷ The authors write:

In our eyes, because of the role it has in society, the museum has the possibility and responsibility to reflect on the present and future realisation of their presentations, to transmit war experiences in an appealing way to the contemporary public. The image of the Second World War is after all not the result of a process that happens to the museums, but something that they can, within their possibilities, also try to guide.¹⁸

The Dutch government agrees with the idea that museums give guidance to the memory culture of the war. In 2015, the government committee '*Versterking van de herinnering WOII*' (Strengthening the Memory of WOII) was established, followed by the '*Platform Herinnering Tweede Wereldoorlog*' (Platform Memory Second World War) in 2016. The platform wants to achieve, together with the associated organisations, to tell a complicated story in an appealing manner and a recognisable way as well as creating space for new insights and links to the present.¹⁹ This implies that the war museums together can

¹⁶ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 22.

¹⁷ Ribbens and Captain, *Tonen van de Oorlog*, 7.

¹⁸ Ibid., 8. Original: "Naar ons idee brengt de rol die het museum in de samenleving krijgt toegeschreven de mogelijkheid en verantwoordelijkheid met zich mee te reflecteren op de huidige en toekomstige invulling van de presentaties, om oorlogservaringen op aansprekende wijze over te brengen aan eigentijdse publieksgroepen. Het beeld van de Tweede Wereldoorlog is immers niet de uitkomst van een proces dat de musea overkomt, maar iets waaraan zij binnen hun mogelijkheden ook een zekere sturing kunnen geven."

¹⁹ See "Versterking herinnering WOII," Commissie versterking herinnering WOII, March 27, 2015, accessed December 15, 2017, <https://www.niod.nl/sites/niod.nl/files/VERSTERKING%20VAN%20DE%20HERINNERING%20WOII.pdf>; "Platform Herinnering Tweede Wereldoorlog: Schets van de doelstelling, inrichting, werkwijze en agenda van het Platform WOII," Nationaal Comité 4 en 5 mei, April 5, 2016, 3, accessed, January 29, 2018, <https://www.4en5mei.nl/media/documenten/platformwoii-doelstellinginrichtingenuitvoeringsagenda.pdf>.

influence the memory culture surrounding the Second World War. Hence, it is important to explore what they want to teach the visitor and how they do this.

Theodor W. Adorno already noted in 1966 in a radio-talk version of "Education After Auschwitz," that to prevent a repetition of Auschwitz (which should, according to him, be the primary focus of education) we need to consider perpetrators; how it was possible they committed such deeds. It is not enough to keep reminding people of values, or of the positive qualities of minorities, because potential perpetrators are prone to this kind of talk.²⁰ Only when the conditions under which characters arise that can turn into perpetrators are known, something can be done about these conditions. Then, people can be educated in self-reflection in order to become aware of the mechanisms and to be able to counteract them.²¹ Adorno hopes that being aware of the conditions and mechanisms involved in becoming a perpetrator, rids one of platitudes such as 'I would never do that'. This is the same idea that the recent field of perpetrator studies departs from. The study of perpetrators has now grown into its own interdisciplinary field with scholars coming from disciplines such as law, medicine, social sciences, and the humanities. Within perpetrator studies, the Holocaust is a key point and the main trigger for the emergence of perpetrator research, but it is not the only historical event that is being researched.²² In the first issue of the *Journal of Perpetrator Research* (2017), several key questions are posited, such as

How do we define, understand and encounter perpetrators of political violence? What can be learned from studying the perpetrators? . . . What can we discern about their motivations, and how can that help society and policy-makers in countering and preventing such occurrences? How are perpetrators represented in a variety of memory spaces including art, film, literature, television, theatre, commemorative culture, and education?²³

²⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, "Education After Auschwitz," in *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 21.

²¹ Adorno, "Education After Auschwitz," 21, 28.

²² Kara Critchell et al., "Editor's introduction," *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 1, no. 1 (2017): 1-2, 4, accessed March 12, 2018, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21039/jpr.v1i1.51>.

²³ Critchell et al., "Editor's introduction," 2-3.

The subject of this thesis relates to the last question.

The German historian Gerhard Paul has produced an insightful overview of the development of German perpetrator scholarship, which Susanne Knittel summarizes well. Although he writes mainly about Western Germany, a country that generally has a different attitude towards the war because of its role in it, the three phases he describes can be related to the Netherlands, which I will show in the following sections. I will use Paul's overview as the basis for this discussion, because I have only found one Dutch overview, which, although it is very clear and thorough, only mentions Dutch collaboration with the occupier.²⁴ According to Paul, from right after the war until the 1960s, approaches such as exterritorialization, criminalisation, and demonization were dominant in German scholarship on World War II perpetrators. These perpetrators were seen as abnormal figures that had nothing to do with the rest of the German society.²⁵ The phases Paul describes more or less coincide with the phases in the Dutch memory culture regarding World War II, of which the first period also lasted roughly from right after the war until the 1960s. Scholars have pointed out that this first period centralised nationalism and unity. In the introduction to *Een open zenuw* (2010), Madelon de Keizer and Marije Plomp state that right after the war, the Dutch government deemed it important to create unity, because it had to fight a new enemy; the communists.²⁶ Van Vree notes that in this period, there were two general patterns in the collective memory of the war. The Netherlands followed that of 'normalisation'; the events of the Second World War had to be fitted in the 'normal' historical developments.²⁷ It was being remembered as a national event, in which

²⁴ See: Ido de Haan, "Failures and Mistakes: Images of Collaboration in Post-War Dutch Society," in *Collaboration with the Nazis: Public Discourse After the Holocaust*, ed. Roni Stauber (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

²⁵ Susanne C. Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny: Disability, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Holocaust Memory* (New York: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 152.

²⁶ Madelon de Keizer and Marije Plomp, introduction to *Een open zenuw: Hoe wij ons de Tweede Wereldoorlog herinneren* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010), 14-5.

²⁷ Frank van Vree, *In de schaduw van Auschwitz: Herinneringen, beelden, geschiedenis* (Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij, 1995), 16. See also Vree and Laarse, *De dynamiek van de herinnering*, 22-3; Rob van der Laarse, "De oorlog als beleving: Over de musealisering en

the country was suppressed by the Germans, but fought back in the resistance.²⁸ Within this discourse, there was hardly any place for dissidents, such as the Jewish victims as a separate group and collaborators or perpetrators.²⁹ Therefore, scholarship on perpetrators or even media attention for them was limited. The collection *Onderdrukking en verzet* (Repression and Resistance), consisting of four imposing books published between 1947 and 1954 is exemplary of the way the Dutch spoke about the war and its perpetrators until the 1960s. The front cover of the second book has an image of the Dutch lion bravely fighting off the Nazi eagle that shows the dichotomy of the brave Dutch people and the evil German Nazis that will be presented in the works. Moreover, the introduction states: "The German *Verordnungenblatt* is there to remember the history of how one can take away a nation's freedom through one seemingly innocent decree after the other and in only a few years 'administrate' them into a slave group. At least had this nation not noticed these cruel intentions in time, and by putting themselves at risk, freed themselves from the web."³⁰ Again, the whole Dutch nation is presented as if it resisted the German occupation. Two paragraphs later, a note is made about the NSB: "From day one this group of traitors has been expelled from the Dutch nation and they remained expelled until liberation day, when they were arrested and put behind barbed wire by the soldiers of the underground army."³¹ The NSB is thereby equated with the German occupier. However, while a large

enscenering van Holocaust-erfgoed," *Reinwardt Memorial Lecture*, no. 3 (Reinwardt Academie, 2010), 9-10.

²⁸ Vree and Laarse, *De dynamiek van de herinnering*, 7.

²⁹ Here we clearly see the effect of the dynamics of memory; today, the Jewish victims are the most well-known and remembered group of victims. See for further information on Dutch memory culture regarding the Jewish persecution: Ido de Haan, *Na de ondergang: De herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging in Nederland 1945-1995* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 1997).

³⁰ J.J. van Bolhuis et al., *Onderdrukking en Verzet. Nederland in Oorlogstijd*, 4 parts (Amnhem/Amsterdam: Van Loghum Slaterus/J.M. Meulenhof, 1947-1954), part 2, 15. Original: "Het Duitse *Verordnungenblatt* is er om voor de geschiedenis te bewaren, hoe men een volk via het ene ogenschijnlijk onschuldige decreet na het andere zijn vrijheid kan ontnemen en in enkele jaren tot een slaventrep kan 'administreren'. Tenminste wanneer dat volk niet tijdig dit boos opzet zou hebben bemerkt en, lijf en goed in de waagschaal werpend, zich uit het web had bevrijd."

³¹ Bolhuis et al., *Onderdrukking en Verzet*, part 2, 15. Original: "Vanaf de eerste dag is deze groep landverraders uit het Nederlandse volk gestoten en zij zijn dat gebleven tot op de dag der

part of the second book is dedicated to the German occupier—its system and also to its people—further on, collaboration is not really written about.³² In general, throughout *Onderdrukking en verzet* the tone makes clear that Germans are morally wrong and the Dutch are right, except for members of the NSB, who are equated with the German occupier. While this is common for the first period after the war, in the 1960s this attitude started to change.

Maybe the best example relating to the shift in remembrance of the Holocaust in the Netherlands in the 1960s is the television series *De bezetting* (The Occupation), presented by director of the *Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* (now called: NIOD, Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies) Loe de Jong, which aired during a period of five years from 1960 until 1965. As van Vree notes, the documentary marks “the transition from the immediate, mostly personal memories to a national and comprising historiography, a monument whose construction received respectful approval but which, once completed, would become a target of criticism and even ridicule.”³³ With help of the new medium, the television, *De bezetting* aimed to create a coherent story of the Second World War. In short, the documentary is about a society that endured something terrible but got through it as one. It pays only marginal attention to aspects of the war that are difficult to fit in the national narrative, such as collaboration, the role Dutch people and instances played in the persecution of the Jews, and the individual stories of Jewish victims.³⁴

bevrijding, toen ze door soldaten van het ondergrondse leger werden gearresteerd en achter het prikkeldraad werden gebracht.”

³² L. Flam, “Onderdrukking en Verzet. Nederland in Oorlogstijd,” *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 34, no. 3 (1956): 794, accessed March 19, 2018, http://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph_0035-0818_1956_num_34_3_2001_t1_0792_0000_2.

³³ Vree, *In de schaduw van Auschwitz*, 60. Original: “de overgang van de onmiddellijke, veelal persoonlijke herinneringen naar een nationaal en omvattend geschiedbeeld, een monument, waarvan de bouw respectvolle instemming oogstte, maar dat, eenmaal gereed, een doelwit van kritiek en zelfs spot zou worden.”

³⁴ Vree, *In de schaduw van Auschwitz*, 65-7.

De bezetting and de Jong's magnum opus *Het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (published between 1969 and 1994, English: *The kingdom of the Netherlands in the Second World War*) have helped to establish a discourse of 'right' and 'wrong', which, although dominant in the historiography on the Second World War for a long time, was one of the aspects the works got critiqued for. While *De bezetting* was the first opportunity to create real unity in the story of the Holocaust and to show this to a large public, the many changes in the 1960s caused this story to immediately deflate. Around the time of the last episode, the old political system was renounced, the reconstruction period had ended and the children of the war had grown up. Van Vree notes that as a consequence of this and other factors, there was a reevaluation of the war period as well as several changes in focus.³⁵ Together with van der Laarse, he writes that the most notable shift in the memory culture was that from the focus on *unity* and *continuity*—which were both prominent in *De bezetting*—to the recognition of *multiplicity*. It was now recognised that there was not just one memory culture of the war, but that each group, each person even, has its own experience regarding the war and that the dominant narrative is not all-encompassing. Consequently, between the 1960s and 1990s perpetrators and perpetration of World War II (both Dutch and non-Dutch) gained increasing attention in the Netherlands. During the time *De bezetting* aired German Nazi official Adolf Eichmann was tried in Jerusalem (1961), where two Dutch reporters were also present (Abel Herzberg for the *Volkskrant*, and Harry Mulisch for *Elsevier*). Like Hannah Arendt, the reporters emphasized that Eichmann was not a monster, but a simple bureaucrat.³⁶ Furthermore, there were a considerable number of other affairs in the 1970s, such as that of the Dutch Menten (1976) and Aantjes (1977), and the German Weinreb and 'the three of Breda' that acted in the Netherlands which got a lot of media attention here. All of these people had been perpetrators during the war in one way or another and were now tried. This shows a change because in the 1950s the wartime activities of a great

³⁵ Ibid., 85, 160-1. See also Vree and Laarse, *De dynamiek van de herinnering*, 32.

³⁶ Vree, *In de schaduw van Auschwitz*, 114.

many people were excused without much turmoil. Moreover, during this phase the attitude towards collaborators seemed to change. In 1967, a book containing interviews with eight former Dutch members of the SS came out.³⁷ In the same year a television program aired for which former members of the NSB were interviewed, which had never happened before. In addition, in 1967 a documentary on former *Reichskommissar* Seyss-Inquart was aired. A year later, a documentary was made on NSB leader Anton Mussert (which aired in 1970). In this documentary, the viewer could not only hear but also see the interviewed former members of the NSB and the documentary clearly told a different story as de Jong's *De bezetting*.³⁸ Especially the reports of the Eichmann trial and the latter documentary show a change in perspective on perpetration and perpetrators, but even the fact that the documentaries were made and shown, regardless of the position that is taken, is indicative of a change.

In perpetrator studies, as Gerhard Paul describes for Germany, the more the war generation aged, the more scholars tended to distance themselves from the perspective that Nazis were secluded others. Scholars started to nuance the idea that Nazis were led by a small elite that had no relation to the general population, and scholars moved towards a conception of Nazism as being integrated in the culture of Nazi Germany. Paul describes this period (between the 1960s and 1990) as one of depersonalisation and abstraction.³⁹ In this period, questions arose about the character of the perpetrators of World War II, as can be seen from for example the description of Adolf Eichmann. Moreover, soon after the start of the Eichmann trial, the American Stanley Milgram began his famous psychological experiments from which he concluded that people are usually obedient when coerced by an authoritative figure and that most people are prepared to obey orders, even when they lead to the death of others.⁴⁰ Both studies are exemplary of studies that show the

³⁷ Haan, "Failures and Mistakes," 83.

³⁸ Vos, *Televisie en bezetting*, 124.

³⁹ Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 152.

⁴⁰ Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (1974; repr., New York: Harper Collins, 2009).

perpetrators of WWII to be 'desk perpetrators,' only following orders. This enabled the general public yet again to distance themselves from the crimes of the Second World War, because the perpetrators were seen as parts of a machinery of extermination.⁴¹ In conclusion, while there was progress during this phase (perpetrators and perpetration were now actually researched) it was a problematic progress because perpetrators were presented as cogs in a machine, hence, as Paul wrote, they were presented in a depersonalised and abstract way.

In the Netherlands, research that complicated the narrative on perpetration had been difficult for a long time, because it was only in 1983 that the discourse of 'right' and 'wrong' that Loe de Jong cultivated was denounced for the first time. During his inaugural lecture, the new director of the NIOD, Hans Blom notes that in principle, doing research about collaboration and resistance is not wrong, because this "has yielded many important insights."⁴² Often, as long as historians do not refrain from the usual moral perspective on the war (the occupier and national socialism were wrong, the resistance was right) they would not get critiqued for making a moral judgement.⁴³ According to Blom, this moral judgement should only be allowed if it does not stop historians from asking new questions, finding new answers to old questions, or from finding new perspectives on the war. Indeed, his lecture led to several interesting inquiries that let go of the notion of right and wrong. Most of these studies confirmed Blom's conclusion that resistance and collaboration were not the only options during the war.⁴⁴ However, his lecture was also criticised at the time, and the discussion on how to write historiography of World War II is still ongoing.

⁴¹ Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 152.

⁴² J.C.H. Blom, *In de ban van goed en fout: Geschiedschrijving over de bezettingstijd in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2007), 15. Original: "[d]e vraag naar collaboratie en verzet is op zichzelf legitiem en heeft vele belangrijke inzichten opgeleverd. Het gaat er om zinvolle extra inzichten te verwerven en toevoegingen van meer dan alleen kwantitatieve of op onderdelen corrigerende aard te doen."

⁴³ Blom, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 12-3.

⁴⁴ Haan, "Failures and Mistakes," 84-5.

The third perpetrator studies phase, which started around the 1990s, also shows a fundamental shift in the scholarly discourse on perpetrators in Germany, the Netherlands and elsewhere, enabled by several factors. Firstly, political and social ones, such as the dissolution of nationalism and a new generation of scholars. Secondly, the shift was enabled by the practical factor of newly accessible archives. Gerhard Paul calls this shift concretization and differentiation, since there is now a focus on concrete, regional, and individual crimes and criminals.⁴⁵ Studies such as that of the American Christopher Browning (1992)⁴⁶ and the BBC Prison Study (2001)⁴⁷ start to research the relation between social conditions, intentions, and other factors, and they show that perpetrators often are ordinary men, and vice versa, that ordinary men can easily become perpetrators. In addition, they show perpetrators to be actors; often the perpetrators showed initiative to persecute and exterminate. With studies such as these being published, "the Nazis lost their comfortably distant image of alienness and became people who were very close to home."⁴⁸

In the Netherlands, there has also been a bigger focus on complicating the story of perpetrators and perpetration. As we have already seen, there is a debate on whether moralistic historiography is productive. In addition, an NWO funded research program on the topic, *Erfenissen van collaboratie* (Legacies of Collaboration) ran from 2008 until 2013. This research program resulted in several books about Dutch collaborators, such as *Doorn in het vlees: Foute Nederlanders in de jaren vijftig en zestig* (Thorn in the Flesh: Wrong Dutch People in the Fifties and Sixties) by historian Ismee Tames.⁴⁹ Another research

⁴⁵ Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 153.

⁴⁶ Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993).

⁴⁷ Alex Haslam and Steve Reicher, *BBC Prison Study*, accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.bbcprisonstudy.org/>.

⁴⁸ Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 153.

⁴⁹ Ismee Tames, *Doorn in het vlees: Foute Nederlanders in de jaren vijftig en zestig* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2013).

project, *Hier woont een NSB'er* (Here Lives a Member of the NSB), resulted in a book with the same name in 2010, written by Josje Damsma and Erik Schumacher. This project researched the daily lives of people in the NSB living in Amsterdam.⁵⁰ Moreover, from 2016 until 2019 HERA is funding the research program "Accessing Campscapes: Inclusive Strategies for European Conflicted Pasts" or in short iC-ACCESS. This is a European research project, led by the Dutch historian Rob van der Laarse, which focuses on the conflicted pasts of former Nazi camps. In the Netherlands, the researchers work together with Memorial Centre camp Westerbork, where they focus on the transit camp's perpetrator history.⁵¹

In the context of the ever-evolving memory culture in the Netherlands and the developments in perpetrator studies I have just outlined, this thesis will focus on exploring how three major World War II memorial sites in the Netherlands (National Monument Camp Amersfoort, Camp Vught National Memorial, and Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork) thematise their perpetrator history in exhibitions and on the terrain of the former camp. What the case studies have in common is that they are the only former Nazi camps in the Netherlands that have been musealised.⁵² In addition, the sites have an important function in the Dutch memorial culture. According to the government, teaching about the Holocaust has more impact when done on the actual historical site. In addition, it is believed that visiting these sites improves feelings of empathy and it makes history less abstract. Consequently, the government made sure the former camps occupy a prominent place in the museal representation of the Holocaust.⁵³ Furthermore, it will be interesting to compare

⁵⁰ Erik Schumacher and Josje Damsma, *Hier woont een NSB'er* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2010).

⁵¹ See www.campscapes.org.

⁵² There does not seem to be one English term for this. I have also seen museumification and museumisation, but I will stick to musealisation.

⁵³ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 171.

the three camps because as I will show in the second and third chapter, they each have a different post-war history and approach to their musealisation.

What I want to explore in these places relates to one of the goals of perpetrator studies. The historian Rebecca Jinks argues that standard representations of the Holocaust (in film, novels, museums, etcetera), do not encourage people to reflect on discrimination. Since this thesis focusses on sites of memory, I will here recall her argument for memorial museums only. Although the goal of memorial museums is typically to raise awareness and to teach their visitors a moral lesson with the aim of preventing genocide,⁵⁴ Jinks argues that due to the techniques these museums employ to represent genocide, they usually undermine their own moral lessons and instead of attitudes provoke platitudes.⁵⁵ According to her, museums often invite responses such as 'Never Again' or 'Never Forget' and she shows that these slogans are, as well-intended as they may be, in danger of becoming non-responses. In other words, they are responses that show no real intellectual or ethical engagement with genocide and its implications and are easily uttered without acting upon them.⁵⁶ The slogans are so well known that they might even have prompted the visitor of a memorial museum to go there. To quote Sharon MacDonald: "Making visits to sites associated with atrocity is, then, for many people a means through which they can perform their own commitment to remembering ['never forget'] and, thus, to helping to avoid an atrocity like the Holocaust being repeated ['never again']."⁵⁷ Moreover, these slogans are often said or written down in company of others, be it in person, or in a guestbook. Uttering them, then, is a way of affirming one's sense of morality, which makes one socially acceptable.

⁵⁴ Laarse, "De oorlog als beleving," 26.

⁵⁵ Rebecca Jinks, "Responding to Genocide: Attitudes and Platitudes," in *Representing Genocide: The Holocaust as a Paradigm?* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 186-7.

⁵⁶ Jinks, "Responding to Genocide," 185.

⁵⁷ Sharon MacDonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2008), 169.

With regards to perpetrators or perpetration, it is easy to think that *you* would never do such things, or that *they* are people that are not like the ordinary society. If you think that perpetrators are not ordinary people, it is easier to think that something like the genocide presented will not happen again. Yet, the perpetrator studies scholarship shows otherwise. Because the museum is a medium that can spread this knowledge and facilitate the opportunity for reflection to a larger public, it is important to inquire as to whether and how they do this. Indeed, Jinks notes that exhibitions often encourage emotional responses by letting the visitor identify with the victim, making them feel closer to the victim, whereas in other ways genocide is distanced, for example by presenting the perpetrators without personal stories (as opposed to the victims) or presenting the situation of genocide as one with a definite end and describing it with words such as 'horror' or 'hell'.⁵⁸ Consequently, after visiting, the visitor might be overwhelmed with emotions that are most easily expressed in a version of the slogan 'never again' or 'never forget'. While Jinks is not opposed to making people feel these emotions based on victimhood or shock and horror as this can be an effective way of informing people about the past, she argues, I think rightly, that these emotions are more useful when they are based on the informed understanding of the conditions that facilitated the atrocity, because then they will lead to more than just platitudes and hopefully facilitate actual reflection.⁵⁹ Of course, it might be impossible to entirely prevent visitors from forming platitudes. However, a museum can at least prevent some specific platitudes. For instance, to dispose of the platitude 'I would never have done that', museums can display a perpetrator's ordinariness, which shows that they were no far-away monsters, or show the decision-making process, which demonstrates that they were not 'just following orders'.⁶⁰ This can help the visitor to be more aware of their own responsibility and liability.

⁵⁸ Jinks, "Responding to Genocide: Attitudes and Platitudes," 189-90.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶⁰ Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 159-60.

In my research, I intend to find out to what extent scholarship on World War II perpetrators and perpetration is received and implemented at sites of memory in order to understand what role the cross-medial thematization of perpetrators can play in commemoration and civic education with respect to the Holocaust and what the advantages as well as the problems and pitfalls can be in this context. Moreover, although my research is limited to the musealisation of three former camp sites, my intention is to provide a position from which to complicate and think further about the thematization of perpetrators and perpetration in Dutch war museums.

To analyse the case studies, I will build and expand upon a number of studies. In *De oorlog in het museum* (The War in the Museum, 2014) Erik Somers has researched Dutch war museums in general. In this book, he has also included the three former campsites I will analyse. As he writes himself, this study “deals with the way in which the history of World War II is exhibited in the museum, the changes regarding this, how these changes can be interpreted, and how the museal representation of the years ‘40-‘45 relates to the constantly evolving memory of the war.”⁶¹ Two authors have written books on the former camps specifically. Roel Hijink wrote *Voormalige concentratiekampen: De monumentalisering van de Duitse kampen in Nederland* (Former Concentration Camps: the Monumentalising of the German Camps in the Netherlands, 2011), in which he researched the development of the former camps Amersfoort, Vught, and Westerbork as memorial places, in his own words, he researched their monumentalisation. Central to his research is the design of the monuments.⁶² A similar book, but with a different focus, is Iris van Ooijen’s *Kampen als betwist bezit: De hedendaagse omgang met de voormalige kampen Westerbork, Vught en Amersfoort* (Camps as Contested Property: The Contemporary Dealing with the Former Camps Westerbork, Vught and Amersfoort, 2018). She, like Hijink,

⁶¹ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 18. Original: “handelt over de wijze waarop de geschiedenis van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in het museum is vormgegeven, de veranderingen die zich hierin voordeden, hoe deze zijn te verklaren en hoe de museale verbeelding van de jaren ‘40-‘45 zich verhoudt tot de voortdurende veranderende herinnering van de oorlog.”

⁶² Roel Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen: De monumentalisering van de Duitse kampen in Nederland* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011).

researched the three former camps, but whereas Hijink focused on the post-war monumentalisation, van Ooijen focuses on the present heritage practices, in other words, whereas Hijink focused on the design of the musealised camps, van Ooijen focuses on the designers and the processes regarding the design.⁶³

Furthermore, I will conduct a discourse analysis of the several (re)presentations that are present at the sites, both in the exhibitions, and in the material remnants that are presented, such as the camp commander's house discussed in the beginning of the introduction. For this purpose, I have visited each site. In my research on the thematization of perpetrator history, I will mainly focus on the narrative that is created regarding this. Within the presentations, I will analyse and compare the narratives of the different media that are used (often, a combination of text, images, film, objects, and lately 3D representation is used) and will show how they work together to thematise perpetration. For each site, I have done an interview. For National Monument Camp Amersfoort, this was with the director Willemien Meershoek. For Camp Vught National Memorial I have interviewed Marek Sengers, creator of the yearly programme, and for Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork, I have interviewed Bas Kortholt, researcher at the site. From these interviews I have learned about the motivations behind certain choices and the future plans for exhibitions.

The first chapter will provide a historical background on the musealisation of World War II in the Netherlands and the three camps. The part on musealisation will focus on the period after 1983, because this was when the first memorial centre on a former camp terrain opened (in Westerbork). Then, I will give a short history of the camps and their musealisation, in order to provide the historical context needed for the next chapters. The next section will provide the theoretical discussion. First, the chapter discusses pedagogy at memorial museums. This is a field that is not common yet in the Netherlands, but is developing in Germany. Specifically, I will focus on memorial site pedagogy relating to the thematization of perpetration. Jana Jelitzki and Mirko Wetzel have made a very useful

⁶³ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 24.

overview of approaches to thematising perpetration at memorial sites which I will use in addition to discussing some pitfalls when presenting perpetration.

In chapter two, a closer look at the exhibitions and former camp terrains will provide an illustration of the different approaches Jelitzki and Wetzel present, in addition to exploring whether and how the different phases in perpetrator scholarship and the Dutch memory culture of the Second World War informed the representation of perpetrators. The chapter will start with an analysis of the permanent exhibitions in Westerbork and Vught as they are now. However, because Amersfoort is still too small to be able to include perpetration in its exhibition, for Amersfoort I will analyse their future plans.

Chapter three is a continuation of the second chapter, and will analyse the exhibition that is held in Barracks 1B near the memorial centre of Camp Vught. This exhibition is a collaboration between several instances and visitors can enter it with the same ticket as the memorial centre. Moreover, in this chapter, I will consider a recent temporary exhibition that was held in the Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork: *The Guards of Westerbork*.

Chapter four discusses the thematization of perpetration at the terrains of the former camps. It is divided into three themes. I will first discuss the more unique way of dealing with perpetration: declaring the landscape to be guilty. This concept is by the artist Armando who lived next to camp Amersfoort during the war. Next, I will discuss how the memorial centres deal with buildings that might be left on the terrain. On the terrain of the former camp Westerbork, the house of the camp commander takes in a very prominent place. Moreover, both the memorial centres of camp Vught and Westerbork organise tours that go past buildings that relate to their perpetrator history. Lastly, I will consider the use of objects on the terrain of the former camp Amersfoort, where the boots and desk of one of the camp commanders are presented.

The three sites will be compared and contrasted in the conclusion, where I will reflect on the different practices of thematising perpetration. I will end with a critical reflection on this thesis and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1

To Hide or Seek: The Thematization of World War II Perpetration in the Museum

1.1 Introduction

In 2008 an exhibition about the internment camp period (1945-1948) in Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork caused a big stir. Iris van Ooijen has written an elaborate analysis of this exhibition and its effects which I will briefly summarise here. The exhibition had a chronological nature. It started with the public presence of the NSB in the 1930s and during the war, went on to the internment camp period of 1945 until 1948 and ended with the post-war social exclusion. The effect on children of 'wrong' parents was also described. The curators decided to exclude the perpetration carried out by the people in the internment camp from the exhibition, because the exhibition was about the internment camp, not perpetration. Van Ooijen argues that because the focus was mostly on children of 'wrong' parents, the focus shifted towards victimization, even though this is not what the Memorial Centre intended. As a consequence of the exhibition, the Memorial Centre got many indignant responses. Some people even ended their donations. However, most responses were not a consequence of the content of the exhibition, but of the expectation people had of the Memorial Centre. The main objection to the exhibition was that the attention to members of the NSB was unjust in a place that is supposed to commemorate the victims of the transit camp.⁶⁴

What the above example shows is that thematising perpetration is challenging for the memorial centres. In this chapter, I will provide another element of the framework, that of the developments of the representation of World War II in the Dutch museum, in order to in the next chapters be able to answer the question of how National Monument Camp Amersfoort, Camp Vught National Memorial, and Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork thematise their perpetrator history. This part will focus on the period after the 1990s,

⁶⁴ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 125-150.

because this period is most important for the understanding of the three case studies. Moreover, this chapter will provide a discussion of pedagogy at memorial museums. This is a field that is not common yet in the Netherlands, but is developing in Germany. Specifically, I will focus on memorial site pedagogy relating to the thematization of perpetration. Jana Jelitzki and Mirko Wetzel have made a very useful overview of approaches to thematising perpetration at memorial sites which I will discuss. In the next chapters, a closer look at the exhibitions and former camp terrains will provide an illustration of the different approaches Jelitzki and Wetzel present, in addition to exploring whether and how the different phases in perpetrator scholarship and the Dutch memory culture of the Second World War informed the representation of perpetrators.

1.2 World War II as heritage in the Netherlands

For an elaborate study on the development of the thematization World War II in the Dutch museum, I refer the reader to Erik Somers' *De oorlog in het museum* (The War in the Museum). Because this thesis focuses on a specific type of war museum—the memorial museum connected to a former Nazi camp, of which the first only existed in 1983—I will only shortly summarise Somers' findings on war museums in the Netherlands until the 1990s before I move on to the more recent history of the musealisation of World War II in the Netherlands. The main conclusion from Somers' work that is relevant for this thesis is that the musealisation of the Second World War followed a similar pattern to the more general development of WWII memory in the Netherlands described in the introduction. In the first phase after the war, that lasted until approximately 1970, the emphasis in presentations of the war was on national unity and the resistance. The biggest actor at that time was the RIOD (the Dutch institute for war documentation). The next phase, starting in the 1970s, showed a shift, because in this phase not only the government but also other organisations became involved in musealising the war and in giving it a moral, political and ideological meaning.⁶⁵ Both the Dutch government and society thought that

⁶⁵ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 118.

with the 25th year of remembering the war, it should now be over. However, the attention for the war only kept on growing and as noted in the introduction, an increasing number of people wanted to be heard. Therefore, the war was now often placed in a contemporary social and political context, sometimes related to international situations.⁶⁶ During this second period, several museums were established, one of them being Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork.⁶⁷

The most recent phase started in the 1990s and is still ongoing. Since the 1990s, the Netherlands has been, with regards to World War II, in a transition from communicative to cultural memory. Simply said, communicative memory can only exist in interaction and communication, and therefore only when people are alive to *communicate* their memory.⁶⁸ With the generation that can communicate their experience dying out, French historian Pierre Nora notes, "an immense and intimate fund of memory" is lost.⁶⁹ Cultural memory, on the other hand "is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent."⁷⁰ This means that cultural memory can be transmitted from one generation to the next and is, unlike communicative memory, not limited to only a few generations. Two developments can be traced during or because of this transition.

Firstly, because the *people* carrying the memory are dying out, *sites* of memory, or *lieux de mémoire*, become increasingly valuable. A *lieu de mémoire* is, according to Pierre Nora, "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage

⁶⁶ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 133.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁶⁸ Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 110.

⁶⁹ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 12, accessed, January 25, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2928520>.

⁷⁰ Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 110-1.

of any community."⁷¹ As the quotation indicates, for Nora a site of memory is not necessarily a place, but can also be for instance an object, song, idea, or tradition. Moreover, these sites of memory are not static. While "they come into being as points where many acts of remembrance converge," they may gain a new meaning, or become obsolete.⁷² In line with this, this thesis focuses on the case studies as dynamic and situated in history. As will be expanded upon later, the three former camps would not immediately become sites of memory after the war.

Secondly, because of the transition from communicative to cultural memory and the accompanying new ways of transferring memory, Dutch war museums both can and need to use new approaches. It is now *possible* to use new approaches, because the war generation has started to engage less with the exhibitions for the practical reason of them becoming too old or dying. Therefore, the museum exhibitions are not always a representation of the war generation's past anymore, but also start to deal with other themes sometimes using new approaches.⁷³ New themes included for instance daily life in the war, culture during the war, post-war generations, and more. Moreover, because of a new public that is not directly involved with the war, museums *need* to use new approaches. From the 1990s onwards, museums started focusing more on the post-war generations. More specifically, the government connected the memory of the war to the notion of human and universal fundamental rights and wanted to create self-conscious individual citizens.⁷⁴ According to the government, knowledge of the history of exclusion,

⁷¹ Pierre Nora, "Preface to English-Language Edition," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvii.

⁷² Ann Rigney, "The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 346.

⁷³ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 158-9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 172. This idea can also be found in the commission *Versterking infrastructuur herinnering WOII*'s final report, which is from 2011: "It is important to keep the memory of the Second World War alive, also in the future. Knowledge of this history help us to understand conflicts in the contemporary world, a world that is still at war. Insight in the core values that were under pressure then, leads to reflection and a perspective on which to act with regards to values that are now important." (author's translation) "Eindrapport commissie versterking infrastructuur herinnering

persecution, and extermination would lead to insight into contemporary forms of discrimination and racism. Through the use of presentations in museums, youngsters should be made aware of their own responsibilities to stop discrimination and racism.⁷⁵ In other words, war museums started to have the distinct pedagogical function of 'raising' citizens with a similar goal to Adorno's in "Education After Auschwitz": citizens need to be self-reflective and aware of recent practices of discrimination. Through the fact that they connect a moral message to the past, war museums distinguish themselves from other cultural-historical museums. The visitor should learn to not make the same mistakes that were made in the past. Somers shows that, with some alterations in focus, this moral aspect has been important for the government (shown in the subsidies they give) since the 1990s.⁷⁶

1.3 A Short History of Camp Amersfoort, Vught, and Westerbork

In the following section, I will first give a short history of the camps, and then discuss shortly how their musealisation process worked in order to give the context needed for the next two chapters.⁷⁷ Both camp Amersfoort and Westerbork were built in 1939. Camp Amersfoort was built to serve as a base for the Dutch army. Camp Westerbork was built as a centralised refugee camp for legal and illegal German Jewish immigrants.⁷⁸ In August 1941, the German occupier took over the camp in Amersfoort; it became *Polizeiliches Durchgangslager* Amersfoort. It was only a relatively small camp and was intended as a

WOII," Rijksoverheid, 5, accessed January 29, 2018, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2016/11/03/eindrapport-commissie-versterking-infrastructuur-herinnering-woii>. Although this report is from 2011, it led to the establishment of *Platform Herinnering Tweede Wereldoorlog* in 2016, which builds on this insight.

⁷⁵ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 156.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-8.

⁷⁷ For a more detailed account, I advise the reader to consult Hijink, Somers, or van Ooijen.

⁷⁸ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 77.; Hijink, *Het gedenkteken, de plek, en de herinnering: De monumentaliserings van de Duitse kampen in Nederland* (PhD Thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2010), 117.

transit camp, however, in practice it was also a labour and punishment camp. Most of the prisoners were political prisoners, but there were also Jews, Roma and Sinti, Jehovah's Witnesses, hostages, black market traffickers and other criminals, people who refused work, and Russian prisoners of war. The guards were known to use arbitrary and excessive violence against prisoners.⁷⁹ On the first of July, 1942, camp Westerbork became a *Polizeiliches Judendurchgangslager*, owned by the SD. This camp was the place where prisoners and deportees were housed before they were transported to the east.⁸⁰ Camp Vught was built in 1942 by Dutch contractors working for the German occupier. The building was finished by prisoners of camp Amersfoort in 1943.⁸¹ In camp Vught, too, there were not only Jews, but also other groups such as Jehovah's witnesses and traders of the black market. Camp Vught was the only SS camp in the Netherlands, but compared to the German concentration camps, the situation was mild in Vught.⁸² On the 8th of March 1943 camp Amersfoort was closed and the prisoners were moved to camp Vught. A few months later, the camp opened again, but now as *Erweiteres Polizeigefängnis*. In this camp, people that refused or evaded work in Germany were imprisoned in camp Amersfoort. In general, during this period people only stayed for a short time and the living conditions were better. On the 19th of April 1945, the camp was given to the Red Cross with Loes van Overeem as its leader.⁸³ The camp became a camp for repatriates, people that were not well enough to move home yet. Moreover, from September 1945 until September 1946 the camp acted as an internment camp for people that were suspected of collaboration.⁸⁴ In September

⁷⁹ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 77.

⁸⁰ Hijink, *Het gedenkteken, de plek, en de herinnering*, 120.

⁸¹ Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen*, 29-30.

⁸² Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 170-1.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁸⁴ "Repatriëringskamp," Kamp Amersfoort, accessed June 28, 2018, <https://www.kampamersfoort.nl/repatriëringskamp/>.

1946, the camp became a military complex again.⁸⁵ Camp Vught was liberated before Amersfoort, in October 1944. Hardly a month later the camp was used by the British and Canadian army, to house several thousands of evacuated German citizens, and as an internment camp. In 1949 the internment camp closed and in the beginning of the 1950s the camp was divided into three parts: one for the Dutch military, one to use as a youth prison, and one part used to house Moluccan KNIL soldiers and their families.⁸⁶ Camp Westerbork was liberated on the 12th of April 1945. Within a month after the liberation of the camp, it became an internment camp for members of the NSB, SS, and others that (were suspected to have) collaborated. The physical and mental conditions were very bad during the first months of operating. Moreover, there were still about 850 Jewish former prisoners in the camp.⁸⁷ In 1951, the camp got a new function, and with that a new name: Schattenberg. It was now a residence for over thousand Moluccans who had fought for the Dutch army.⁸⁸ At the end of the 1950s the government decided that the Moluccans should move, which they reluctantly did. In 1967 a large part of the terrain was taken over by the Radio Telescope. In 1971, the last barracks were demolished.⁸⁹

Generally, while the post-war history of each of the camps is different, they have gone through a similar process of monumentalisation that can be divided into roughly three phases.⁹⁰ In the first phase, the period between 1945 and 1970, national monuments were erected to commemorate executed prisoners. At the same time, however, the camps were re-used for several different purposes or torn down. This phase can be called one of commemoration and repressing. The government thought that while the victims should be

⁸⁵ "Militair complex," Kamp Amersfoort, accessed June 28, 2018, <https://www.kampamersfoort.nl/militair-complex/>.

⁸⁶ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 171; Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen*, 157.

⁸⁷ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 109-10.

⁸⁸ "1951 Aankomst," Kamp Westerbork, accessed June 28, 2018, <https://kampwesterbork.nl/nl/geschiedenis/molukkers/1951-aankomst/index.html#/index>.

⁸⁹ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 229.

⁹⁰ Of course, these boundaries are not set in stone and processes may overlap each other.

remembered, keeping the camps as they were was unnecessary. These were not the right places for commemoration.⁹¹ Monument-wise, for Vught the first monument was unveiled in 1947 at the former execution site. This monument, however, did not commemorate everyone imprisoned in camp Vught, but was exclusively dedicated to the resistance fighters who were killed there.⁹² The camp terrain itself was, as described, used for more practical ends. Amersfoort, too, chose to build a first monument at the former execution site, which was unveiled in 1953. The monument was made by Frits Sieger and is called *Gevangene voor het vuurpeleton* (Prisoner in Front of the Firing Squad).⁹³ During the first years after the war, the Jewish community also did not think camp Westerbork was a place to remember, but one to forget.⁹⁴ Hence, the first monument that was erected on the terrain of the former camp Westerbork was not dedicated to the Jewish victims, but to the resistance.⁹⁵

The second phase, from 1970 until around 1985, is that of the 'rediscovery' of the camps. The camps were going to be demolished, but people tried to keep as much tangible remnants as possible. For this purpose, several committees and foundations were established, but often, they did not succeed. When in the 1970s the camps got more attention, hardly anything was left to see.⁹⁶ In 1971, when the military complex on the terrain of former camp Amersfoort was demolished, two wall paintings were discovered which depict camp Amersfoort. These paintings had been hidden behind a wooden panel for a long time, but in 1972 they became a museal object. Around this wall a tiny museum was built, so that the camp would be visible again.⁹⁷ However, at the time, not much else

⁹¹ Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen*, 16-7.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 54.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁴ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 146.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 146-7.

⁹⁶ Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen*, 16-7.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 190-1.

was done. In Vught, nothing noticeable happened during this period. Westerbork was the most progressive in that sense. On the fourth of May, 1970, the National Monument Westerbork was revealed at the place where in the past the deportation trains would stop.⁹⁸ However, this monument, made by former prisoner Ralph Prins, did not tell the visitor the history of the camp. Because the buildings on the former camp terrain had been demolished, and the monument was not enough to tell the history, people wished for a documentation centre.⁹⁹ In 1980, the government made the Dutch Auschwitz pavilion in collaboration with the RIOD. The director of the RIOD suggested to recreate this pavilion in a new memorial centre, that had to be three kilometres away from the camp terrain because of the new radio telescopes. The centre opened in 1983 and back then, the exhibition mostly consisted of information panels without any objects. The replica was not received very well, because it told a very general history of the Jews in the Netherlands, of which the German occupation was only a very small part.¹⁰⁰ When the centre opened, the goal was to realise a better layout of the former camp terrain, one that would provide information to people that visited the monument.¹⁰¹

The last phase, which started around 1985, is one of 'restored memory'. Plans and ideas that were already formed in the 1970s could now be executed. For a long time the camps had been forgotten, but now institutionalised memorial centres were established. The campsites were made into historical sites.¹⁰² In 1986 the foundation *Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught* was established with the aim of preserving the memory of camp Vught and what happened there. Moreover, the foundation wanted to inform people on the interaction of the camp with the outside world. In order to accomplish this, they thought the crematorium and the execution site needed to be preserved, buildings needed to be

⁹⁸ Hijink, *Het gedenkteken, de plek, en de herinnering*, 97-8.

⁹⁹ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 146-7.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 147-9.

¹⁰¹ Hijink, *Het gedenkteken, de plek, en de herinnering*, 94-5.

¹⁰² Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen*, 16-7.

reconstructed, and information on the history of the camp needed to be gathered. Lastly, a reflection centre had to be built. In 1990, the plans were realised. However, because the reconstruction of buildings was too expensive, it was decided to build a foundation the size of an actual barracks. On one half of this foundation a symbolical barracks was built, on the other half a large stone scale model was placed, which is still there today.¹⁰³ Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork had already been established just before the demarcation of this phase. In 1993, with the memorial centre's tenth anniversary, their objectives were broadened. Now, apart from giving information on the site's history and present, doing research was stimulated and the centre started to create an archive. Moreover, the focus started to shift from the commemoration of the Jewish victims towards a focus on the history of the place.¹⁰⁴ In 1999, the memorial centre was expanded and renewed. On the terrain, historical traces were made more tangible, and they made a new permanent exhibition, which is still there today. Lastly, in 2001 the government decided that camp Amersfoort would get a structural subsidy and in 2004 the new visitor centre was realised.¹⁰⁵ It was the last of the German camps to gain the status of national monument.¹⁰⁶

1.4 Pedagogy in the Memorial Museum

The exhibition on the internment camp period of camp Westerbork described in the beginning of the chapter exposes a specific difficulty for the memorial centres of Camp Amersfoort, Vught, and Westerbork. They are memorial centres on or near places where people met their death. This comes with two functions. On the one hand, the places are *memorial* sites. In this function, the sites are not neutral but are there for the descendants and family members that want to remember their passed relatives. On the other hand, as

¹⁰³ Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen*, 228-30.

¹⁰⁴ Hijink, *Het gedenkteken, de plek, en de herinnering*, 94-5.

¹⁰⁵ Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen* 235.

¹⁰⁶ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 178.

institutionalised memorial *centres* the places inform visitors about their history.¹⁰⁷ They have a similar function to a memorial museum, which has a moral guiding function. A memorial museum is, like the memorial centres for camp Amersfoort, Vught, and Westerbork, a place of guilt and atonement that helps us remember the moral failure of the past. It does this both through commemoration and giving information.¹⁰⁸ The two functions might seem incompatible and do create complications and frustrations, but they can work very well together, because when people are informed on what happened in or near the place, the urge to commemorate the victims might grow. In Germany, *Gedenkstättenpädagogik* (theory and practice) is developing to be a distinct field. In English, this roughly translates into memorial site pedagogy. In the Netherlands, there does not seem to be such an academic field yet so for this thesis I will use a German description. Jana Jelitzki and Mirko Wetzel describe memorial site pedagogy as a form of historical-political education on the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust. It is different from other forms of historical-political learning, because for memorial site pedagogy, the site itself is important both as site of commemoration and of learning.¹⁰⁹ Memorial site pedagogy tries to combine the two functions of commemorating and learning. It aims to convey the actuality of history and to show that people have a concrete social responsibility and liability. In sum, memorial site pedagogy has three aims: 1) to convey knowledge on the history and legacy of National Socialist crimes; 2) to contribute to socio-political-cultural memory; 3) to aid the civic education of the visitors, i.e. to convey democratic values and human rights.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen*, 281.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹⁰⁹ Jana Jelitzki and Mirko Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen: Nationalsozialistische Täterschaft in der pädagogischen Arbeit von KZ-Gedenkstätten* (Berlin: Metropol, 2010), 121.

¹¹⁰ Jelitzki and Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen*, 122.

1.5 Thematising Perpetration in the (Memorial) Museum: Pitfalls and Possibilities

Within memorial site pedagogy the confrontation with perpetrators has long been underexposed, both in theory and in practice. Several reasons are already described above. Memorial museums have a twofold function, to commemorate and to inform. While the war generation was still alive, to inform mostly meant to inform on their history; the history of the victims. Moreover, because of its memorial function, people saw and sometimes still see the memorial museum as a place people should be informed about victims, not perpetrators, so as to not commemorate the perpetrators. Hence, thematising perpetration in such places comes with resistance from the public. In the following sections, I will discuss some more difficulties for the thematization of perpetration, as well as approaches museums can use.

1.5.1 Trends in the Museum and Heritage Industry: Authenticity, Experience and Identification

Usually, heritage consumption is voluntary, it (often) costs money and attention, and mostly happens during one's free time. Often, it is enjoyable, whether this is because you learned something or see it as relaxation. At places related to war, this is more complicated. Here, the relation between human suffering and entertainment is juxtaposed, which "introduces an element of seriousness into an activity engaged in for fun, as well as it introduces a trivialization of the serious."¹¹¹ Tourism of this kind is called thanatourism, or dark tourism: tourism that causes the tourist to experience dark emotions such as that relating to pain, horror, death, or sadness, emotions that are usually not associated with voluntary entertainment experience.¹¹² The memorial centres of Westerbork and Vught have benefited from this kind of tourism and have grown into professional museums, with temporary exhibitions, cafés and book shops. Camp Amersfoort's memorial centre also has

¹¹¹ G.J. Ashworth, "The Memorialization of Violence and Tragedy: Human Trauma as Heritage," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, ed. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 231.

¹¹² Ashworth, "The Memorialization of Violence and Tragedy," 234.

concrete plans to expand, which I will elaborate on in the next chapter. On the other hand, it must be noted that a significant part of the visitors are not tourists, but school groups. The memorial centres have special guided tours, programs and educational offerings for school groups. While it would be interesting to include these in the research, the scope of the project does not allow this.

The term thanatourism makes one thing clear: the visitors are seen as tourists. As Rob van der Laarse writes, due to an evident Holocaust memory boom, sites of memory are now 'consumed' as if they were touristic heritage experiences. Increasingly, heritage and tourism are seen as something for pleasure.¹¹³ In the policy plan of Camp Vught National Memorial it is also noted that it is expected that increasingly, heritage will become part of people's leisure activities, which means heritage increasingly has to compete with other leisure providers.¹¹⁴ As a consequence of this, and because of the many technological inventions and new ways of communication, three trends that are very much interrelated can be identified in the current museum and heritage industry: authenticity, experience, and identification, which each form a challenge for the thematization of perpetration in war museums. As discussed in the introduction, the war generation is no longer available as intermediary between the war and a generation that has not experienced it. Therefore, people look for other ways to come closer to the war, which museums try to facilitate. To feel closer to the past, the use of authentic objects has become more important. Moreover, these objects should create the feeling of a historical experience. This is done through the use of authentic objects, but also through images and the presence of the place itself, such as the former camp grounds. Rob van der Laarse calls this materialisation of memory.¹¹⁵ An experience makes it easier to learn and can create a feeling of identification with the past. Identifying with the past might also make it easier to understand an exhibition, and therefore a more immediate and emotional experience. Somers notes that the question

¹¹³ Laarse, "De oorlog als beleving," 14, 17.

¹¹⁴ *Naar een moedige samenleving: Beleidsplan 2017-2021 Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught*, 12, accessed June 1, 2018, <https://www.nmkampvught.nl/beleidsplan-2017-2021/>.

¹¹⁵ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 243.

museums are confronted with is not whether the popularising of the past is desirable, but how museums should respond to these developments in a responsible manner.¹¹⁶ War museums *are* now part of the touristic heritage industry, so to gain visitors they need to accommodate to the trends.

These trends in the museum and heritage industry can hinder the thematization of perpetration at the memorial sites. A challenge with showing objects related to perpetrators is that the memorial centres need to avoid attracting visitors that are there to worship the items because they idolize the perpetrators. In the visitor centre itself, the use of authentic objects regarding perpetration can be contextualised through informational texts. On the former campsite, this is more difficult. For Amersfoort and Vught, this is not necessarily a problem. In Vught, some buildings that were used by the SS are left, but these are not accessible to the public, because they are in use by the van Brederode military base. While a large area of the former terrain of camp Amersfoort and its surroundings are open to everyone, here, no specific perpetrator heritage can be found. The only one of the three former camps in the Netherlands that has authentic material remnants left in the form of buildings is Westerbork. This terrain is open to everyone and houses the SD bunker (where taken Allied weapons were stored), a grave where nine members of the NSB were buried during the internment camp period, and, most importantly, the camp commander's house. Because of these authentic places, the site risks attracting visitors that visit to honour the perpetrators. In the last chapter of this thesis I will discuss these places in more detail, and contemplate how this danger is avoided.

Secondly, the experience economy might also create a difficulty when a museum wants to thematise perpetration. In how far can it be productive to create an experience of perpetration or its mechanisms? Luckily for the memorial centres, it is not necessary to create an experience of perpetration per se. As I will discuss later, Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork is currently creating a 3D model of the camp commander's house together with

¹¹⁶ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 244.

the Pompeu Fabra University of Barcelona. This model will allow the visitors to experience what it is like to be inside of the house of the camp commander, but does not let the visitor experience what it is like to be a perpetrator. The bigger challenge is the trend of identification. For the goal of identification, often personal stories are used. A common approach is giving the visitor some insight into the personal choices that have been made during the war. Generally, the visitor is able to understand the dilemmas victims and bystanders faced. But how should a museum let a visitor identify with a perpetrator? Should this even be done?¹¹⁷ Some museums have accomplished the design of an exhibition in which identification with victims, bystanders, and perpetrators is possible. They invite the visitor to take their own position regarding the choices that were made during the war. With this technique the museums avoid only scaring people—which, as Rebecca Jinks notes, only creates platitudes—and make the link to the present because they make people aware of universal values.¹¹⁸ However, Erik Schumacher notes that Dutch museums seem too often to fall into the trap of representing the perpetrator by focusing on people who did not have anything to do with the persecution of the Jews, for instance a woman that is presented as following her husband or a child whose parents were member of the NSB. In this way, the focus is still on victimisation and not on responsibility.¹¹⁹ Indeed, this problem comes back several times in the next two chapters.

1.5.2 Thematising Perpetration: Dilemmas, Approaches, Pitfalls

Apart from the trends in the museum and heritage industry that make presenting perpetration more difficult and the fact that visitors of memorial centres expect to see a victim perspective, there are some further questions concerning the thematization of perpetration in museums or on heritage sites. In this last section, I will first describe some dilemmas regarding thematising perpetration. Then, I will discuss Jelitzki's and Wetzel's

¹¹⁷ Schumacher, "Oog in oog met de collaborateur," 9.

¹¹⁸ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 160.

¹¹⁹ Schumacher, "Oog in oog met de collaborateur," 11.

list of ways to thematise and describe perpetration. Lastly, I will discuss some problems and pitfalls.

A first question that has led to debate is whether perpetrators should even be understood. Does understanding run the risk of condoning or is it vital to prevent a repetition of the past?¹²⁰ As we have seen in the introduction and this chapter, the nearer we come to the present, the more the answer leans towards the thought that understanding perpetrators is vital for the future. Related to this question is the tension between the humanising and demonising of perpetrators. If you decide to present a perpetrator, how can this be done? On the one hand, painting a picture of perpetrators as monsters can be comforting, because it distances 'them' from 'us'. Humanizing them is more unsettling: it confronts the audience with the knowledge that perpetrators can be in the midst of society.¹²¹ Yet, humanising the perpetrator should not excuse their crimes. Caroline Pearce, who has analysed several perpetrator sites in Germany, argues that this pitfall can be avoided "by including the victim perspective in order to strike home the reality of Nazi criminality."¹²² A further question—one that does not directly refer to the thematization of perpetrators, but nonetheless is very important—is raised by Sharon MacDonald. I would like to quote this its entirety, because she expresses it very well:

How far is it legitimate to try to 'convey' a particular emotion in an exhibition? Is this to engage in emotional manipulation, a practice in which the National Socialists were themselves so expert? Some pedagogical approaches argue that effective education requires making an emotional engagement; and it is often maintained that a key reason for experiencing 'real sites' is that they are more likely to generate an emotional response. But others suggest that, especially in difficult cases like these, heritage presenters should try as hard as possible to avoid affect and to simply 'present facts'; or that too much emotion interferes with learning.¹²³

¹²⁰ MacDonald, *Difficult Heritage*, 107.

¹²¹ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 124.

¹²² Caroline Pearce, "The Role of German Perpetrator Sites in Teaching and Confronting the Nazi Past," in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, ed. Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 169.

¹²³ MacDonald, *Difficult Heritage*, 107.

In the Netherlands, war museums often decide to create emotional engagement, instead of presenting mere facts. However, as we will see in the next chapters, for thematising perpetration, Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork often decides to present mere facts and raise questions. One last dilemma regards the use of images of perpetrators. For instance, depicting Nazi perpetrators in their uniform avoids sensationalizing their crimes, but also means showing the perpetrator how they wanted to be depicted. It shows them in a position of power, with "no indication of their later defeat."¹²⁴ On the other hand, those are often the only photos that are available. Using no picture at all, might risk that visitors who are more interested in photos do not to read the text at all. According to Bas Kortholt, researcher at the Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork, another way to choose what picture to use is to think about the story you are telling. Are you telling the story of a perpetrator in his/her function? In that case you show them in uniform. Are you telling the story of their personal life? Then you show them in leisure clothes.¹²⁵

Despite all these dilemmas, museums have chosen to thematise perpetration. To fill the gap of underexposure of the confrontation with perpetration in memorial site pedagogy, Jana Jelitzki and Mirko Wetzel have described three ways to thematise perpetration at memorial sites. The first option is to keep the information given focused on local history.¹²⁶ This foregrounds the narratives of people who lived or worked on or near the site. As we will see, this option was chosen for the exhibition in Barracks 1B, where the history of the place is told with a great focus on personal stories. A second option is to use the theme of perpetration to teach about human rights and democratic values. From the past we can learn that discrimination and radicalisation have taken place, hence, they can take place again, albeit possibly in another form. What can thus be learned from the past is that radical ideas can be considered as positive ideas by a very large group. An exhibition about this can help make people aware of the dangers of discrimination and

¹²⁴ Pearce, "The Role of German Perpetrator Sites," 169-70.

¹²⁵ Bas Kortholt, interview with author, Hooghalen, April 20, 2018.

¹²⁶ Jelitzki and Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen*, 198.

radicalisation and can help them develop a critical position towards normality in society.¹²⁷ Lastly, instead of centralising the story of local people, a memorial site can decide to centralise the historical situation. This thematises perpetration not through the perpetrators, but through the system through which people became perpetrators.¹²⁸

These three ways of thematization are or of course not absolute. A memorial site can choose to combine two or three ways. For example, the exhibition in Vught that will be described in the next chapter, combines a description of the historical situation with local, personal stories. Moreover, within these ways of thematising perpetration, Jelitzki and Wetzel define seven ways of describing the perpetrator. Again, these ways are not set in stone and can easily be combined. Firstly, an exhibition can focus on the organisational structure of National Socialism. Usually, this fits within the foregrounding of the historical situation, which we will see in the next chapter, when I describe the temporary exhibition *The Guards of Westerbork* in Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork. Secondly, an exhibition can convey that perpetrators were often ordinary human beings.¹²⁹ This counters the belief that perpetrators were monsters and had nothing to do with the rest of society.¹³⁰ Next, a memorial site can show how ideology works and how people can come to radicalise. Moreover, a memorial site can show the psychology behind this radicalisation. Furthermore, a memorial site can choose to tell the story of individual perpetrators.¹³¹ This helps the visitor to understand the historical background and what certain people did in larger historical processes of which the memorial sites are part. It sheds a light on how a society has come to believe in the wrong things and that this can therefore happen again. It shows that people that were good can become perpetrators.¹³² If a memorial site decides

¹²⁷ Jelitzki and Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen*, 198-205.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 204.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 205-7.

¹³⁰ Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 159.

¹³¹ Jelitzki and Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen*, 207-9.

¹³² Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 159.

to tell the stories of individual perpetrators, it is productive to also show that there was a room for choice and manoeuvre within their actions.¹³³ An illustration of the choices people had to make addresses the presumption that perpetrators were often just following orders to avoid a death penalty.¹³⁴ Relating to this, lastly, a memorial site can foreground people who acted morally inconsistently, against their own conviction or that of the group. This illustrates the idea that it is possible to change one's opinion and to better oneself.¹³⁵ A specific challenge for the presentation of individual stories is that unlike for victims, there are often no or very few post-war accounts from perpetrators. These would be useful in order to show whether perpetrators showed regret, or recognised or admitted their crimes. With this absence, it is often more difficult to draw a lesson based on the perpetrator perspective.¹³⁶

Other difficulties and dangers include a lack of interest of youth. The war is increasingly further away in the past, which means that the youth of today might not have any living family members anymore that remember the war. Hence, it is understandable that they might have problems in seeing the relevance for their own lives. To involve youth, often special programs are set up, but in the exhibitions it will often be a challenge to keep them interested. Moreover, a challenge is creating a balance between distance and fascination. Too often, youth will uncritically take over the perpetrator perspective, so context is needed to avoid this. However, giving too much context might create a distance that can also cause a lack of reflection. Another pitfall is the use of simplified explanation models or setting several explanation models off against each other. This has the danger of exculpating the crimes of the perpetrators. A last danger is that of auto-exculpation. As we will see, in the first part of the permanent exhibition in Vught, this plays a large role.¹³⁷

¹³³ Jelitzki and Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen*, 213-4.

¹³⁴ Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny*, 160.

¹³⁵ Jelitzki and Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen*, 215.

¹³⁶ Pearce, "The Role of German Perpetrator Sites," 171.

¹³⁷ Jelitzki and Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen*, 230-7.

If used together, the approaches of thematising and describing perpetration can complicate the narrative on perpetration that is often presented or presumed. Together, these techniques can illustrate the diversity of perpetrators, show exceptions of the norm, and concretise historical interpretations.¹³⁸

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the recent development of museum and heritage practices in the Netherlands in order to give more context for the case studies. I have discussed the consequences of the transition from communicative to cultural memory, that is now happening in the Netherlands. Because of this transition, sites of memory become more important to bring people closer to the past. Consequently, the former camps have gained importance in the memory culture. Moreover, because the people that have experienced the war are dying out, museums both can and need to use new approaches and themes in their exhibitions. One of these themes is that of perpetration. However, as a consequence of certain trends in the heritage and museum industry, the presentation of perpetration might sometimes be difficult. We live in an experience economy, which means people will pay for experiences. In war museums, moreover, these experiences need to be based on authenticity; authentic objects, interviews, photos, etcetera. These experiences can then help the visitor to identify with the past. But should museums let their visitors identify with perpetrators? If so, how far should they go and how should this be done? In the next chapters I will illustrate this in more detail. Moreover, a specific problem for the memorial centres of Camp Amersfoort, Vught, and Westerbork is that they are *memorial* museums, the name of which implies a victim perspective. On the one hand, they are there for the victims and their descendants as places to mourn. On the other hand, they provide information on the history of the place. Lastly, I have discussed other dilemmas, approaches, and pitfalls regarding the thematization of perpetration that museums have to think about before doing so. These will be illustrated in the next two chapters, too.

¹³⁸ Jelitzki and Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen*, 243.

Chapter 2

The Thematization of Perpetration in Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork, Camp Vught National Memorial, and National Monument Camp Amersfoort: Permanent Documentary Exhibitions

Of the crimes committed in Hitler's power range, the neo-Nazis say: they are lies. The Germans say: The Nazis did it. The Europeans say: The Germans did it. The Americans say: The Europeans did it. The Asians and Africans say: The white did it. And once one will say: Humans did it.¹³⁹

Harry Mulisch, *De zaak 40/61*

2.1 Introduction

I feel that this quote from Harry Mulisch's *De zaak 40/61* (a report of the Eichmann trial) illustrates very well why memorial sites dedicated to the Second World War should not only thematise victimhood or a history of the place, but also perpetration. By informing visitors about this history, they might counteract the first part of the citation, people saying that "others" did it. By thematising perpetration, they can make clear that humans did it. I have chosen to divide the last two chapters thematically, which gives me the possibility to compare and contrast the sites in a more nuanced way. This chapter discusses the thematization of perpetration and the pedagogical value of confronting this aspect of the Second World War in the three Dutch memorial museums selected for analysis, National Monument Camp Amersfoort, Camp Vught National Memorial, and Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork. While Harry Mulisch and Adorno emphasised the importance of education on perpetration early on, the three sites have been slow in thematising perpetration more actively in their exhibitions and on the campsites. The permanent exhibition of Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork is the oldest of the three. It was made in 1999 and at that time focused on the period of 1942-1945.¹⁴⁰ In 2002, the last part of the exhibition, which was

¹³⁹ Original: "Van de misdaden die in Hitlers machtsbereik gepleegd zijn, zeggen de neo-nazi's: het zijn leugens. De Duitsers zeggen: Het waren de nazi's. De Europeanen zeggen: Het waren de Duitsers. De Amerikanen zeggen: Het waren de Europeanen. De Aziaten en Afrikanen zeggen: Het waren de blanken. En eens zal men zeggen: Het waren mensen."

¹⁴⁰ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 163.

about the aftermath of the war for the survivors and their relatives, was changed to cover the place's post-war history. Now, the internment camp, the Indonesian repatriates, and the Moluccan inhabitants also have a place in the permanent exhibition.¹⁴¹ In the exhibition, the Memorial Centre gives the abstract number of deported and killed people a face using personal stories. The site's mission as presented on the website is:

to maintain the former camp terrain and the traces in the landscape that remind us of the layered history of that camp, as well as manage and present the collection that tells and illustrates the story of this history to a broad audience. In that way the Memorial Centre contributes to the memory of the Second World War in general and the Holocaust especially, of which reflection, finding meaning, and historical deepening are a part.¹⁴²

It is unclear whether this memory should be the memory of the victims or also of bystanders and perpetrators. As Bas Kortholt told me, the main goal of the memorial centre is telling the personal stories of the former prisoners. However, to counter the platitude 'Never Again', history needs to be told from several perspectives, including the perpetrator perspective. Only then visitors can find out why people did certain things, both in the smaller context of camp Westerbork and in the larger one of the system of National Socialism.¹⁴³ As we will see, this vision is reflected in the permanent exhibition, which focuses mainly on the personal stories of former prisoners but also thematises perpetration.

¹⁴¹ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 149.

¹⁴² "Documenten," Kamp Westerbork, accessed July 9, 2018, <https://www.kampwesterbork.nl/museum/herinneringscentrum/organisatie/documenten/index.html#/index>. Original: Het Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork wil het voormalig kampterrein en de sporen in het landschap die herinneren aan de gelaagde geschiedenis van dat kamp, alsmede de collectie die het bronmateriaal over deze geschiedenis vertelt en illustreert in stand houden, beheren en op een hedendaagse manier presenteren aan een breed publiek. Op die manier draagt het Herinneringscentrum bij aan de herinnering aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog in het algemeen en de holocaust in het bijzonder, waar reflectie, zingeving en historische verdieping onderdeel van uitmaken.

¹⁴³ Bas Kortholt, interview with author, Hooghalen, April 20, 2018.

The current permanent exhibition of Camp Vught National Memorial was made in 2002, when the Memorial was subsidised by the government to build a new memorial centre.¹⁴⁴ Whereas the attention in 1990 had still been on totalitarian systems and the fallen nation, in the new memorial centre the theme of choices is foregrounded. The visitor guide from 2002 states: "The history of camp Vught is more than a story of numbers and facts. It is a story of experiences and choices."¹⁴⁵ In other words, people are the starting point. A bit later, victims, but also perpetrators and bystanders are named. The Memorial's central values are described in the policy plan for 2017-2021. Firstly, the National Memorial wants to let people experience the authentic place, giving each visitor information appropriate to their needs and wishes. Secondly, the Memorial wants, through use of the historical place, to convey information and knowledge on persecution, terror and courageous behaviour during the Second World War. Lastly, this knowledge should contribute to reflection on the contemporary relevance of the war considering the motto 'to commemorate means to reflect'.¹⁴⁶ The last two values leave space for the thematization of perpetration. This chapter will reflect on whether the thematization of perpetration is actually implemented in the permanent exhibition.

Lastly, the goal of the Foundation National Monument Camp Amersfoort outlines two main components of the work that takes place there:

The Foundation wants to preserve and protect the remains of the camp and promote the use of the National Monument Camp Amersfoort in accordance with its objective. The foundation wants:

- To make the territory of the former Camp Amersfoort (the PDA) into a place of remembrance, commemoration, and reflection, as well as to maintain the memory of all people that were imprisoned there as a result of the Nazi regime, with care for the interaction between the camp and the outside world.

¹⁴⁴ Somers, *De oorlog in het museum*, 177-8.

¹⁴⁵ Mare Uijland, Christel Tijen, Jeroen van den Eijnde, *Eindpunt of tussenstation: Gids Nationaal Monument kamp Vught* (Vught: Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught, 2002), 7. Original: "De geschiedenis van kamp Vught is meer dan een verhaal van getallen en feiten. Het is het verhaal van lotgevallen en keuzes."

¹⁴⁶ *Naar een moedige samenleving: Beleidsplan 2017-2021 Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught*, accessed June 1, 2018, <https://www.nmkampvught.nl/beleidsplan-2017-2021/>, 22.

- To provide information on the historical and contemporary meaning of the terrain on the terrain itself and in the vicinity.¹⁴⁷

The focus here seems to lie on commemoration of the victims and giving information on the historical site. Like for the other two memorial sites, this last function leaves room for the thematization of perpetration. Yet, taking into account the history of the Dutch memory culture of the Second World War in which the focus has long been on the victims, the fact that only Vught's mission explicitly speaks of perpetrators anticipates that this group might not be a big part of the documentary exhibitions. Yet, as I have shown in the introduction, including perpetrators in the exhibition is believed to counter the platitudes Never Again and Never Forget, as this inclusion avoids a stereotypical narrative on mass murder and explains how something like it could happen. In the next sections, I will first analyse the permanent documentary exhibitions in chronological order. Here, we see that indeed, the thematization of perpetration is not always very prominent. Both Vught and Westerbork do thematise perpetration, where Vught focuses on the organisational structures and Westerbork on the actual perpetrator perspective. Amersfoort does not thematise perpetration in its current exhibition.

2.2 Permanent Exhibition Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork

When you enter the permanent documentary exhibition of Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork you first have to pass through an arch, a grey wall with reproductions of well-known photos, such as one of Anne Frank, Settela Steinbach (the girl in between the train doors), or the train tracks in front of Auschwitz. Moreover, a newspaper article about the

¹⁴⁷ Organisatie," Kamp Amersfoort, accessed July 9, 2018, <https://www.kampamersfoort.nl/organisatie/>. "De stichting wil de restanten van het kamp behouden en beschermen en het gebruik van het Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort conform de doelstelling bevorderen.

De stichting wil:

- Het grondgebied van het voormalig Kamp Amersfoort (het PDA) bestemmen tot een plaats van herinnering, herdenking en bezinning, naast het in stand houden van de herinnering aan al degenen die daar door het nazi-bewind om bezettingsmaatregelen gevangen zaten, met aandacht voor de wisselwerking tussen kamp en buitenwereld.
- Op het terrein of de naaste omgeving van dit voormalige kamp informatie verschaffen over de historische en actuele betekenis ervan."

first day of the occupation, a photo of the *Kristallnacht*, a reproduction of a sign that says "Voor Joden verboden,"¹⁴⁸ a reproduction of the sign "Westerbork-Auschwitz, Auschwitz-Westerbork" that was on the train, and on the right, a photo of a monument which is on the camp terrain, three kilometres further away, prominently featuring the stars of David. Lastly, a short poem is printed on the wall, which is called "Geography" and is about a girl that had an insufficient grade for geography, and yet a week later she knew where Treblinka was, although only for a short while. Having to pass through this wall, which also has a big sign saying *Durchgangslager* Most likely, the majority of the images presented on the wall are already known or at least correspond with the notion of World War II and concentration camps people have acquired through media etcetera. This creates a mindset that might be less open to a complication of what visitors already know. It is also indicative of what the largest part of the exhibition is about: the personal stories of prisoners from the period 1942-1945.

Right after the arch, on the left wall, there is a small explanatory panel called "The transit camp Westerbork" which presents a brief history of the camp. It notes that over 100,000 people were imprisoned in camp Westerbork during the war. It continues with the information that the camp was administrated by the SS, although the prisoners themselves had to do the internal organisation. It is noted that the Nazis wanted to deport the Jews as quietly as possible, and that hence, they used a system of "false hope." The panel ends with explaining why prisoners would choose to help with the organisation or other jobs—in the hopes of avoiding deportation. At one point, it notes "The SS leaders and guards stayed in the background," which is also what happens on this panel. In short, this first panel focuses on the organisational structure of the camp, which includes perpetrators. However, it mainly describes how the prisoners in the camp acted and what they had to do. Next, there is one other panel that focuses on the organisational structure. The sign has the title "Abteilung IVB4," which is a division of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, led by Adolf Eichmann. It explains the organisation of the deportations. These were ordered in

¹⁴⁸ Translation: Jews not allowed.

Germany, where Eichmann gave orders to a Dutch subsection in The Hague. The Hague then gave orders to camp commander Gemmeker, who let the internal Jewish camp organisation make the transport lists. The sign notes that the deportations could not have happened without the docile Jewish Council, Dutch people, civil service, police and the Dutch Railway Organisation. Fittingly, this panel can be found in the drawer of a desk in the middle of the pathway. While not everyone described on the panel was a 'desk perpetrator', Eichmann is often characterised as such, and the panel focuses on the organisational aspects of the transports, which often happened behind a desk.

To the right and left of this desk, there are two instances where the narrative on perpetration is complicated. To the right of the desk, there are some short information panels with old-fashioned telephones next to them. One of the panels is about P. Kinkel. He was working at the Royal Military Police when he was posted as a guard at camp Westerbork. However, after a few weeks he called in sick and he was moved to Groningen. After he refused an order to work he went into hiding and joined the resistance. Next to the panel, you find an old-fashioned telephone. In other places the exhibition uses more modern headphones, but here, the telephone adds to the bureaucratic 'desk perpetrator' feeling already created by the desk we saw before. Through the telephone, which you consciously need to 'pick up' in order to listen, the visitor can hear his perspective. This story of an individual concretizes the avoidance of simplified explanation structures of people being right or wrong. Moreover, it shows that it is possible to act on your own

choice,

to

say

no.



Figure 1. Left: interactive construction, middle: desk with panel on organisation, right: information on guard who refused work. April 2018.

Moreover, to encourage visitors to reflect more critically on what they would have done, an interactive construction is presented on the opposite wall. On the wall, you see six boxes, each with a picture on them. Five of the boxes show people or buildings on them, the middle one shows a question mark. From the pictures alone, you can already make out that they each tell a different story. To learn more, each box can be opened and within each box, you find a short personal story of someone related in one way or another to camp Westerbork. Each title inside starts with 'I', for example "I guarded the prisoners," or "I saw the trains go by."¹⁴⁹ Then, a very short personal story is presented. For example, about the guard the visitor reads that he was a witness to the incoming transports and that he had a lot of contact with the prisoners. From the person who saw the trains, we learn that he lived next to the little station and witnessed the transports. Moreover, for the visitor who wants to learn even more, each box has a headphone inside it, which presents a more detailed testimony. The box with the question mark is different. When you open

¹⁴⁹ Original: "Ik bewaakte de gevangenen", and "Ik zag de treinen rijden."

this one, you see yourself reflected in a mirror. Without explicitly using the terms victim, perpetrator or bystander, the construction concretizes possible actions related to the camp and motivates you to reflect on your own possible actions. Who would you have been? The different forms of media together, text, photo and testimony, make the construction accessible for different types of visitors. In essence, seeing the photos and then the mirror is enough to be able to reflect on what you would have done yourself. However, for the visitor who wants to know more, there is the text and the headphones with testimonies. Especially the testimonies make it clear that the choice was not so easy. This construction is a productive diversification of the exhibition, because while most of the exhibition informs or creates a feeling of empathy through the experience of seeing (sometimes) authentic objects and hearing or reading testimonies, this part actually activates visitors to reflect on themselves.

The last wall of the exhibition tells the camp's post-war history. A wall on the visitor's left side is divided into four periods. One explanatory panel in the beginning details what happened to the camp after the war. For each period, related objects and photos are displayed. Moreover, while everything is mostly displayed on the wall, each period shows a life-size cut-out person facing the visitor, which is an enlarged reproduction of a historical photo. For the internment camp period, this is a man that is shaved bald and has a swastika on his forehead. He has his hands in the air and a sign around his neck that says *landverrader* (traitor). The life-size cut-out does not show the actual context of the photo, but this is shown on the wall, where you can also see the actual historical photo. From that, you learn that in reality, he was also 'displayed', as the actual photo shows him high up with a big crowd behind him. All in all, this picture gives a one-sided notion of who was interned in the camp after the war. What it does show, is what happened to (suspected) collaborators right after the war and what people thought of them. It might be fruitful to add a further nuanced explanatory panel for this period.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ The same goes for the other periods, since at the moment, there is just one panel that details who was in the camp at what moment, but there are no panels explaining more details, such as what it was like.

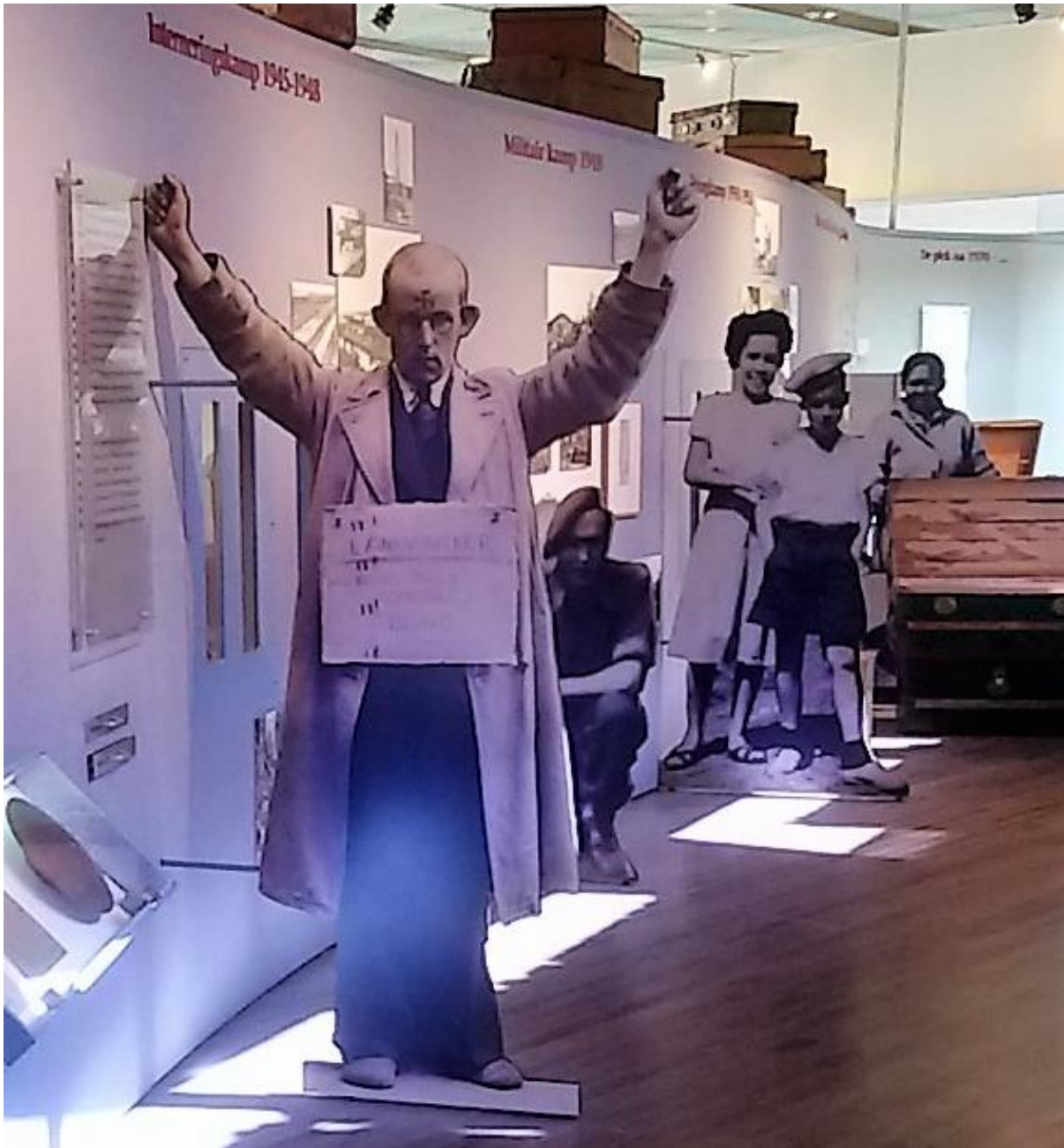


Figure 2. End of the exhibition in Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork. April 2018.

Furthermore, the wall displays some photos of what the internment camp looked like, and there are two displays inside the wall. The first shows NSB relics such as a poster, pins, and a swastika. The box on the right shows objects that have to do with the internment camp, such as a scheme of the organisation, two caricatures made in the camp and a photo of a man sitting behind a desk. Neither of the displays detail what is in them, you have to see this for yourself. This makes it hard to learn anything other than that there was an internment camp for members of the NSB and other people that (were suspected

to have) collaborated. Moreover, the display with the NSB relics and propaganda might make it seem that only members of the NSB were interned. There is no disclosure on how many people were interned in the camp and who they were.

In sum, while the entrance wall with well-known images and the permanent documentary exhibition in Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork centre on the personal stories of the deportees, perpetration is thematised as well. It uses two of Jelitzski's and Wetzel's ways to thematise perpetration. Part of this thematization focuses on the National Socialist system and the organisation of the deportations, but another part centralises personal stories to concretise possible choices during the occupation period. Moreover, as a visitor you are encouraged to contemplate the possible choices and to reflect on what you might have done during the war. Presenting perpetration in this way is a first step, since it is done in a way that does not simplify the explanation. However, while different forms of media are used—written explanatory text, objects, photos, spoken testimonies—it is mainly the written text and testimonies that actually add something to the complication of perpetration. For example, the desk on its own does not say anything about perpetration, but using it to display information on the organisation of the deportations might help you imagine what it must have been like sitting behind such a desk. There are no objects presented that in itself are interesting for the thematization of perpetration, apart from the ones relating to the internment camp period, but these are not contextualised. The testimony of the guard that decided to refuse his work makes clear that there was room for action based on your own convictions, but this testimony will probably be missed by many visitors because it can only be listened to. The question remains whether the thematization of perpetration as it is done now is enough to really have an effect. The exhibition, understandably, centralises the stories of former prisoners and it is simply easier to feel empathy for them and to want to understand their story than to have to reflect on perpetration or on what you might have done. To encourage reflection, and maybe even to inform people on perpetration or the difficult choices that had to be

made, more is needed. At the moment, it is too easy to just skip the panels on perpetration or its complication and only focus on the history of the former prisoners.

2.3 Permanent Exhibition Camp Vught National Memorial

When visiting Camp Vught National Memorial, the visitor typically follows a set route. The route begins in the rooms that house the permanent exhibition. It continues outside, where there is a scale model of the camp and a reconstruction of a barracks. After that, the route leads to the crematorium—which is still original—then back inside to the so-called response wall and reflection room, and then into a temporary exhibition, ending with the exhibition *Ogen van de oorlog* (Eyes of the War) that shows pictures taken by photographer Rogier Fokke. These pictures show the faces of people who survived camp Vught with an object that reminds them of it. The exhibition in Camp Vught National Memorial was made by the agency Marcel Wouters Ontwerpers which is specialised in educational exhibitions.



Figure 3. Permanent exhibition Camp Vught National Memorial. June 2018.

The permanent exhibition is structured around personal stories which together tell the larger story of the Nazi regime.¹⁵¹ The first room of the permanent exhibition conveys the story of camp Vught. More precisely, it shows the story of being imprisoned in camp Vught.¹⁵² Clockwise, the first thing you see is a display case with objects and remnants that were excavated on the camp terrain. The finds include bottles, mugs, utensils, and parts of buildings. The middle of the room displays objects that illustrate what it was like to live in the camp. The objects include camp uniforms, clogs, suitcases with personal belongings in them, photos, and more, everything related to former prisoners. It is very spacious and not much information is provided other than some information on the objects. For more information a(n audio) tour is needed. The left wall displays a long strip that presents videos with testimonies of former prisoners, explanatory texts with general information and information on the reproductions of photos and documents, and said reproductions of photos and documents. Apart from giving information on former prisoners, this wall also provides information on bystanders and other people that came into contact with the camp, such as the police. While the rest of the exhibition centralises the personal stories of prisoners of camp Vught, this wall begins with a panel that provides background information about Nazi Germany. It states that when the Netherlands was occupied in 1940, this came with discrimination, violence, fear and suspicion. Concerning what people in the Netherlands did, the text explains: "It is an extreme period, in which people are sometimes confronted with very difficult choices. Others are in a difficult and hopeless situation, without having any influence on this. A small group has the conviction and the courage to actively resist."¹⁵³ This divides the people of the Netherlands into three groups: a group that had to make difficult choices, a group of victims without any agency to act,

¹⁵¹ Peter van Kester, "De werkelijkheid is altijd grijs," *Museumvisie*, no. 1 (2008), 41.

¹⁵² Uijland, Tijen, Eijnde, *Eindpunt of tussenstation*, 5.

¹⁵³ Original: "Het is een extreme tijd, waarin mensen soms voor zeer lastige keuzes worden geplaatst. Anderen verkeren in een moeilijke en uitzichtloze situatie, zonder invloed hierop te hebben. Een kleine groep heeft de overtuiging en de durf om actief verzet te plegen." The same tekst can be found in the visitor guide: Uijland, Tijen, Eijnde, *Eindpunt of tussenstation*, 15.

and the resistance. Because victims and resistance fighters are named in the next sentences it seems that the first group should be the perpetrators and/or bystanders. Moreover, immediately after the given citation, there is a description of what resistance fighters did. For the 'group that had to make difficult choices' there is no such description. This contradicts the visitor guide that clearly states the National Monument aims to present the story of camp Vught through personal stories and the focus on choices. On the one hand, it is true that not everyone who had to make difficult choices ended up being a perpetrator. However, because it is explained what the resistance fighters did, the lack of an explanation of the "difficult choices" is even more obvious. As a consequence of this lack, it seems that Wouters shies away from presenting (a group of) Dutch people explicitly as perpetrators. In an interview he notes that in projects such as these, his agency never judges about wrong or right. That is not their job.¹⁵⁴ Yet, the juxtaposition—using the word "others"—makes it seem as if a judgement *is* made: the perpetrators are not worthy of being named or discussed in more detail. The rest of the wall partly counteracts my argument, because there, perpetrators *are* being named and discussed. However, the use of language contradicts the statement that no judgement is made. On the one hand, indeed, people are named by their name, function, or group instead of being a victim, perpetrator or bystander. On the other hand, we will see that other aspects of the language do pass judgement.

First, after the explanatory panel just described and a video with testimonies of former prisoners, you find a photo with German military men sitting in front of what looks like a café. In the front, a waiter looks at the camera. Its caption tells an interesting story: "After the occupation many Dutch citizens try to maintain their everyday routine. They are not wrong, they are not right, they adapt. Of course, it takes some getting used to all the German uniforms on the streets, but otherwise little seems to have changed. Generally, the German military behaves in a correct way."¹⁵⁵ This caption clearly makes a statement

¹⁵⁴ Kester, "De werkelijkheid is altijd grijs," 41.

¹⁵⁵ Original: "Onder de Duitse bezetting proberen veel Nederlanders de draad van het gewone leven weer op te pakken. Ze zijn niet goed, ze zijn niet fout, maar passen zich aan. Het is

on the morality of bystanders. All Dutch people are presented as bystanders that were neither wrong nor right. Moreover, the caption describes that nothing much changed for the Dutch people, except for the German military in the streets. This is a rather simplified explanation, which potentially exculpates large parts of the Dutch population. There is little room for nuance. Interestingly, the same photo is also presented in the visitor guide, but with a different caption. Here, the caption is: "During the first period the German military act very correctly. For many people the idea arises that it is 'not all that bad.'"¹⁵⁶ This caption similarly states that the German military acted correctly during the first period of the occupation. However, whereas the first caption judges the Dutch population to be neither right nor wrong, this caption does not do so. On the other hand, this caption presumes that the Dutch thought it was 'not all that bad'. Both captions contribute to the sense that the Dutch people were a unity during the war. In the first caption they all adapted, in the second they all thought it was not so bad. This adheres to views held right after the war, views of unity and right and wrong. Neither caption describes what is on the picture, it presumes what people thought and did based on just one photo. It might be more productive to add more nuance to the caption, or to give the audience room for questioning it by for example contrasting it with another photo.

Next to this photo, there is a portrait photo of Anton van der Waals. The caption describes his actions during the war: when the war started he had a fine job, but he was ambitious and wanted more. Hence, he made contacts with the resistance, but also with the NSB and the German army. When he came into contact with someone from the *Sicherheitsdienst*, the "sly and faithless" van der Waals became an informant for the SD. Because of him, hundreds of people ended up in prisons and concentration camps. In 1950 he was arrested and executed. Oddly, while the exhibition centralises the story of camp

natuurlijk wel even wennen aan al die Duitse uniformen op straat, maar verder lijkt er weinig veranderd. Over het algemeen gedragen de Duitse militairen zich correct." However, the caption that is displayed in the museum can also be read on page 15 of the visitor guide.

¹⁵⁶ Uijland, Tijen, Eijnde, *Eindpunt of tussenstation*, 14. Original: "De eerste tijd gedragen de Duitse militairen zich zeer correct. Bij veel mensen ontstaat het idee dat het eigenlijk 'wel meevalt'.

Vught, van der Waals' actions are not directly related to the camp other than that he sent people there because of his actions. On the one hand, as Jelitzski and Wetzel argue, telling individual stories in a documentary exhibition contributes to the sense that perpetrators were not an anonymous group, but that they were actually individuals that made their own choices. Especially in the text on van der Waals, his choices are foregrounded: he had a fine job but chose to talk to several other potential employees and then chose to work for the SD. However, I think this portrait on van der Waals illustrates what Jelitzki and Wetzel mean when they argue that it is most productive to combine biographies with showing functionality in a way that the biographies illustrate and concretise the larger picture.¹⁵⁷ The lack of contextual information—this is the only story of an individual Dutch perpetrator in this room—leaves the visitor with a limited idea of the different scopes for action during the German occupation and the different ways in which Dutch people sometimes became perpetrators.

Lastly, there are two explanatory panels about the police. First, there is a reproduction of a sign from the 1940s that says the police will reward every Dutch citizen that helps with the arrest of people that violate the food supply or the Wehrmacht. The sign focuses on getting rid of 'unwanted elements'. While this sign does not come with explanatory text, underneath, the makers of the exhibition have added the text "Many people are too cowardly to openly betray someone. The police of Vught gets this *klikbrief* (denunciation letter), of course without the name of the sender."¹⁵⁸ Underneath this there is a reproduction of a photo of the *klikbrief*, which says: "Is it true that you know that there are still Jewish people in Vught without a star. Travel every day without star. Cycle without star. Visit the cinema without star. Trade on the black market on a large scale etc. etc."¹⁵⁹ Again, while Wouters stated that his team did not want to pass judgement in the exhibition,

¹⁵⁷ Jelitzki and Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen*, 256-61.

¹⁵⁸ Original: "Veel mensen zijn te laf om openlijk iemand te verraden. De Vughtse politie ontvangt deze klikbrief, uiteraard zonder afzender."

¹⁵⁹ Original: "Is het waar dus het U bekend is dat er in Vught nog Joden lopen zonder ster. Iederendag reizen zonder ster. Fietsen zonder ster. De bioscoop bezoeken zonder ster. Zwarte handel doen op grootte schaal enz. enz."

a clear judgement is passed: the people that sent letters such as this one were cowards and informers. It would be more productive to state that the police got many similar letters and to raise questions about why people would send such letters to the police. Some did it for monetary gain, but other reasons include solving private rivalries or general fear. A bit later, the police is described to be the group that struggled the most with honour and conscience. This is illustrated with the story of Frans Abrahams. This policeman had to work during one of the transports of prisoners of camp Vught. During the walk from the camp to the police station, Abrahams is approached by one of the prisoners. Later, the prisoner is able to escape through an open door of the police station. As a consequence, Abrahams is imprisoned for four weeks, which the panel describes as a light punishment. Here, we see a good example of how a (short) biographical example can concretise a certain statement. Moreover, it shows that perpetration is not black or white. Abrahams could be described as both a perpetrator (in his function of helping with the transports) and a rescuer (he helped a prisoner escape death).

Lastly, indirectly, the exhibition also gives a description of the Dutch and German SS guards of the camp. On the wall we find a reproduction of a police report from December 1942/January 1943 in which some small parts of text are highlighted. The first page only speaks of the police. The highlighted sentences note that the fact that camp Vught is now in use means that the police has more tasks and needs more people. The highlighted sentences on the next page, however, speak of the transports to camp Vught. These are said to have made a big impression on the citizens of Vught. The next highlighted sentences read: "Mainly the behaviour of the several Dutch SS guards was disapproved of by the public, while the physical condition of the prisoners incited much compassion. For several days this was the subject of many conversations, in which it was expressed that the behaviour of the German guards or commanders was much more correct."¹⁶⁰ Again, like in

¹⁶⁰ Original: "De transporten van gevangenen naar het kamp in de Vugtherheide hebben op de bevolking een diepen indruk gemaakt. Vooral het optreden van verschillende Nederlandsche SS-bewakers genoot de afkeuring van het publiek, terwijl de fysieke toestand der gevangenen veel medelijden wekte. Verscheidene dagen lang is dit het onderwerp van vele gesprekken geweest, waarbij men tot uitdrukking bracht, dat de behandeling van de Duitsche bewakers, c.q. bevelvoerders veel correcter was."

the picture with the German military in front of the café, the Germans are presented as acting correctly, while the Dutch SS guards are demonised. This police report has no caption and no contextualization. You have to read on the report itself what it is. Firstly, this might mean that fewer people actually read what is highlighted, because there is no introduction on what the document is about. Secondly, not giving any context for this document risks the visitor uncritically taking over the perspective of the police report.

In sum, this first room presents a reductive and simplified idea of collaboration, perpetration, and even bystanders, which risks either exculpation or demonization. Although the terms perpetrator, bystander and victim are not used, they are implicitly very present. The Dutch bystanders seem to be excused (“They are not wrong, they are not right, they adapt”). On the other hand, the one person who clearly was a perpetrator is demonised and dismissed as “sly and faithless”. Moreover, while the German guards and military are presented as having acted correctly, the Dutch SS guards are demonised. The exhibition in this room centralises personal stories to illustrate the larger picture, but to be able to present perpetration in a productive way, it needs to provide the visitor with more context. One biographical story is not enough to be able to illustrate for example the possible scope of action or the different reasons for becoming a guard.

The next room is more successful in thematising perpetration. It focuses on the organisational structure of ‘the system’ that led to camp Vught and in which the camp functions. The room consists of forty-six shoulder-height pillars that are positioned in straight lines. According to Marek Sengers, employee of the Memorial, the room is designed to show the massiveness of the system, as well as how it is led—very systematically. The pillars are placed in straight lines, resembling a roll call, the concrete evoking a cold feeling of order.¹⁶¹ The pillars have a u-form and within each of them a story is told by means of an object, a video, a photo or map. The room combines displaying information that is linked to camp Vught—such as information on the camp commanders, some guards, and maps—with providing information on the broader historical situation. For the purpose of this

¹⁶¹ Marek Sengers, interview with author, Vught, June 12, 2018.

analysis I have chosen to only focus on those pillars that thematise perpetration, and I will divide my discussion into three topics: propaganda and society, the organisational system, and the perpetrator as ordinary man or woman.



Figure 4. Exhibition on the National Socialist 'system' in Memorial Centre Camp Vught. June 2018.

The first pillar displays three Nazi posters with Dutch text on them and two with German text. The explanatory note states that all Dutch citizens were expected to comply with Nazi ideals. The posters shown were a way to accomplish this. The next two pillars are also about 'creating' people with Nazi ideals. There is a pillar that shows a peep hole box for children, and one that speaks of the modern techniques that were used, such as radio and film. This same pillar also speaks of the dynamics between making others into scapegoats and exaggerating the power of National Socialism. Moreover, this last pillar also shows six quotes (by Hitler and Joseph Goebbels) on propaganda. The quotes include: "People will sooner believe a large lie than a small one."¹⁶² And "Propaganda has nothing to do with truth. We serve truth by serving the German victory."¹⁶³ Another pillar displays only a book that is called *Moeder, vertel eens wat over Adolf Hitler!* and yet another one displays a paper with a German song about Hitler. The last pillar in the row contains a video screen which shows excerpts from Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens*, with the explanation that this film might be able to show us what it must have been like to be part of such a large, cheering mass. My description of the pillars follows the sequence in which the visitor will most likely see them, from left to right. Considering this, they show a development from the infiltration of propaganda into the daily life, to creating fear, to Leni Riefenstahl's film, in which a mass of people is seen cheering for National Socialism. Interestingly, in contrast to the pillars that will be discussed next, they mainly use objects to show how the propaganda worked, instead of text. Showing objects is effective, because they show the visitor what society saw before and during the war. In this case, seeing an authentic object has a potentially larger effect than merely reading about it. Together, these pillars show the visitor how ideology works to create a sense of group belonging based on exclusionary ideas.

Let me now turn to the organisational structures the exhibition presents. A first pillar presents the German SS. This group is described rather elaborately and very

¹⁶² Original: "De meeste mensen zullen eerder in een grote leugen geloven dan in een kleine."

¹⁶³ Original: "Propaganda heeft niets te maken met de waarheid. We dienen de waarheid door de Duitse overwinning de dienen."

factually. It is described how many people were in the SS-camps at what times, and how many members of the SS there were. Moreover, it is described that it was mostly Heinrich Himmler that transformed the SS into an elite, he decided that the SS men should be 'super-Nazis'. Apart from the pillar that includes this elaborate description, there is one with the eagle pin that is worn on the SS uniform, the skull pin that is worn by an SS-officer on his hat, and some bullets. However, only in the visitor guide are these objects described, in the exhibition they have no description. Another pillar describes the SS in camp Vught specifically. It describes that the concentration camps gave the SS ample opportunities to become hardened and to release their anger on the prisoners. Boredom, too, led to quite some SS members finding ways of 'entertainment', such as harassment, abuse, and murder. A last pillar on the SS describes the Dutch SS. It states that the Dutch SS is established by NSB-leader Mussert, partly to lure people to join the Waffen-SS. More than 25,000 Dutch men voluntarily wore the German uniform during the war, mostly that of the Waffen-SS. It is noted that not many press photos exist of the Dutch volunteers in the East. However, some photos taken by a volunteer are shown in the pillar. The photos show a deportation to Auschwitz and depict both prisoners and guards. At the bottom we read why so many Dutch men voluntarily went to the East: the Nazis had invaded the Soviet-Union in 1941, and tried to mobilise people in the Netherlands to fight at the Eastern Front. Because in the Netherlands there were already some anti-Communist feelings, the Germans succeeded in gaining many volunteers. The last sentence explains that on the train station from which the volunteers left to the East, copies of *Mein Kampf* were distributed, of which we see a picture above the text.

We can also read about the German Gestapo. This display notes that they were the most feared "executor of terror". The Gestapo could lock people up without any process. Generally, this was accepted by the citizens, who assumed that now they and the rest of society would be protected from 'unwanted elements'. Moreover, the explanatory text states that the Gestapo was used by people to solve personal conflicts; one just had to tell off someone to the Gestapo and the conflict would be solved. The Gestapo sent people to camp Vught, but had no direct contact with the place. People who were in direct contact

with the place were the camp commanders, shown in another pillar. The three commanders are shown in order, from top to bottom. We learn about the role the commanders played in the larger structure of mass murder, how they came to camp Vught, what they were responsible for, and what happened to them after the war, but except for their age there is no private information on them. Next to each of the piece of text, there is a photo of the specific camp commander. Each of these photos depict the commander in uniform and clearly posed. While you can take a good look at their faces, which makes them seem more ordinary than monster, the lack of concrete autobiographical information nevertheless leaves the question of why they became camp commander and who they were largely unanswered.

Lastly, we can find two more pillars on people related to camp Vught. The first explains that there were different groups in the camp: the prisoners, the elite of prisoners with a job, and the SS. Generally, it is explained, prisoners only see the SS members of a lower rank, the ones that deal with the daily guarding. Women have female guards, called *Aufseherinnen*. Examples of jobs for prisoners are named. It is explained that on the one hand, these prisoners have to show the SS that they fit within the system so that they do not lose their job. On the other hand, they have to try to keep the respect of the other prisoners. This system not only saves a lot of work, it also plays people off against one another. To illustrate this, the display also shows a document with the rules for Kapo's, a photo of an unidentified man (in the visitor guide it is noted that this is Otto Brauner, head of the Kapo's in the Jewish punishment block), and two portrait photos of Karl Lennertz. His story of how he became the *Lagerälteste* is displayed too. This pillar is a good example of how different media can work together to tell one story. The first story focuses on the functionality of the camp, while the second is a concretization of the former. Then, the photos illustrate what the Kapo's looked like, as well as give a face to Karl Lennertz, whose story is told. The document with rules for Kapo's then illustrates the rules they had to stick to.

Lastly, there is a pillar with three biographies of guards, two women and one man. First, Suze Arts is described. The beginning of the text concerns her time before the camp.

It is noted that she was born in a fine Catholic family. What is not noted is that she is Dutch and only later went to a boarding school in Germany, which is where she learned about National Socialism. Then, the jump is made towards her time as a guard in camp Vught. She is the woman that brings the female prisoners to the cell where the 'bunker drama' happened: during the night of the bunker drama, over seventy women were locked up in a small cell as a punishment. Several of them died as a consequence. Next, Franz Ettlinger is described. His description mentions that he was the one that encouraged Suze to become a guard in camp Vught. Furthermore, the description entails what he did in camp Vught. It is not mentioned what happened to him after the war. Lastly, Jo van Drunen, another female guard is described. The description mainly entails her responsibilities in the camp. All three descriptions include a picture. The one of Ettlinger shows him in uniform, clearly posing for a portrait. That of Arts is a picture taken after her arrest, and that of van Drunen is what looks like a family photo, although it is noted that the children in the picture are actually hostages that were taken hostage to force a family member to turn him or herself in. These stories and photos give the perpetrator a face, a biography. From this we learn that the guards in Vught were not an anonymous group, but actual people, Dutch people as well as Germans. It is interesting that the photo of Ettlinger depicts him in uniform, posing for the camera. In a sense, Ettlinger is therefore given the face he wanted to have, to show. Moreover, his biography is the only one that does not mention what happened to him after the war, hence there is no sign of his later defeat, as there is for example for Suze Arts. The picture we see of her is taken when she was captured. What is missing from these biographies, however, is a more detailed description of how the three ended up in the camp. Why did they work there? Did they make the conscious choice? Arts decided to work there based on Ettlinger's advice, but did she agree with National Socialist ideas? Were there other options? On the other hand, what is laudable is that this panel displays two women and a man, and not only male guards, which is often the case. Moreover, there is no considerable difference in the descriptions of cruelty for the genders. Often, female perpetrators are described as much more cruel than men, but on this panel it is not even stated that Arts was sometimes called 'the hyena of Vught'.

It is stated that prisoners thought she was the most loyal to the camp regime and that she was involved in the bunker drama, but for Ettliger, too, it is described that he abused many people in the camp, also leading to death. The description of van Drunen only includes her responsibilities, no description of further perpetration. In short, the panel normalises gender in perpetration and does not present female guards differently, more cruel or submissive, than male guards.

The last pillar is also possibly the fullest one. This pillar does not describe the situation of Vught, but complicates the narrative on perpetration. It starts with a citation of Primo Levi: "It happened, against all odds: incredibly, it happened that a whole civilisation, civilised people, stood behind a charlatan. It happened, so it can happen again; that is the core of what we have to say."¹⁶⁴ This citation shows the reason perpetrator studies is needed. The display is called "Where there are victims, there are perpetrators." It looks at the perpetrators in concentration camps as a group and explains that they were often ordinary men or women. "The murderers of the camps and execution squads can in one hour remorselessly kick people out of the train and into the gas chamber, and in the next be a good family father who walks the dog, hugs the children and embraces his wife."¹⁶⁵ Beneath this text pictures are shown of, indeed, an SS officer with his wife and children. The text and pictures work together to deny us the comfortable feeling of perpetrators being monsters. The text explains us that this is often not true and the photos of the SS officer with his family confront us with the evidence. Beneath that, fragments of SS doctor J.P. Kremer's diary are shown. He was a doctor, not in Vught but in Auschwitz and in these fragments he describes "disinfecting" prisoners who had lice with the gas Zyklon-B. Moreover, he describes 'special actions' as more brutal than Dante's hell, yet,

¹⁶⁴ Translated from Dutch on display: "Het is gebeurd, tegen alle verwachting in: ongelooflijkerwijs is het gebeurd dat een heel volk, een beschaafd volk . . . zich achter een charlatan schaarde . . . Het is gebeurd en kan dus weer gebeuren; dat is de kern van wat we te zeggen hebben."

¹⁶⁵ Original: "De moordenaars uit de kampen en in de executiepelotons kunnen het ene uur nog meedogenloos mensen de trein uitschoppen en naar de gaskamer jagen, om vervolgens als goede huisvader de hond uit te laten, de kinderen te knuffelen en de echtgenote te omarmen."

because of the extra food and drink guards get when participating in them, they are popular. These fragments literally show a perpetrator perspective. However, the display does not mention why these fragments are there. On the one hand, one of the fragments gives a reason for guards participating in atrocities, but on the other hand describing murdering people as disinfecting them is so cold that it counteracts the description of perpetrators often being ordinary people. Yet, describing prisoners this way was common during that time, since it dehumanised the victims and hence made it easier to kill them. Beneath the diary fragments, the display describes that new guards (it is not mentioned where) often adapt within a month. This happened so soon because of group pressure, the deep-seated image of the enemy, the structure of following orders and the habit of delegating the dirty jobs to someone else. The display mentions that it is now thought that guards who did not contribute to the atrocities were not punished, yet, hardly anyone quit. Lastly, the display shows a *Wehrpass* of *SS-Untersturmführer* Johannes Figula. It shows the pass in front, with behind that an enlarged version of his portrait photo that is on the pass. Below this, his war career is told, but it is unclear how he is related to camp Vught. It is noted that documents like these are rare: "The reason is obvious."¹⁶⁶ It is not stated what happened to them after the war. Again, like for the guard just described, there is no mention of choices, of room for action. However, it is mentioned that he was a dedicated Nazi. Adding to this pillar that shows that perpetrators are not all evil, but that they are often rather ordinary human beings, is a pillar that plays a video with testimonies of people who were imprisoned in camp Vught. Several former prisoners, men and women, tell what they thought of the guards and stories about things that happened. Their opinions do not always correspond, which shows that there is not *one* true narrative and that individual guards may have acted differently in different situations. For example, one woman tells about the female guards that they were also just women, but another focuses more on Suze Arts and calls her a "dragon". Together, the video testimonies tell a similar story to the pillar discussed above, but from a different perspective.

¹⁶⁶ Original: "De reden is duidelijk."

All in all, the room with the pillars uses many different techniques and forms of media to describe perpetrators and perpetration, or 'the system', as it is called in the visitor guide. The different media work together so that the same idea is presented in several forms and in several places. Several of the forms of describing perpetration that Jelitzki and Wetzel mention are used. The thematization of propaganda shows how ideology works and is created. For this purpose, authentic objects, text, photos, and film are used. Moreover, different groups are described. Mostly, the focus is on what these groups did and why or how they did this, illustrating the organisational structure. Sometimes, individual stories are told, but these too mostly focus on what the individuals were responsible for during the war, they do not include biographical elements that might indicate why people chose to do certain things. Photos add illustrations to the stories and give the perpetrators a face so that they are brought closer to the visitor. The photos show that the perpetrators were not anonymous people. The perpetrator perspective as such is only present in the diary entry from the J.P. Kremer, doctor in Auschwitz. However, it should be noted that showing a real perpetrator perspective was never the intention. As Marek Sengers told me, the intention was to explain how the system works, to give context on how system like this can come into existence.¹⁶⁷ The design of the room already indicates what sort of system we are dealing with, one that is very cold, impersonal, and orderly. In other words, it stages a feeling. Furthermore, because the pillars could be said to resemble a roll call, they remind us of cogs in a system. This feeling is countered by what is shown *in* the pillars. Often, the pillars show us individual stories, and they show that many perpetrators were ordinary men and women. What is missing from these stories is the thematization of choice, which I will come back to in the next paragraph. However, what is done well is that as a consequence of the many ways used to present the system, certain dangers are avoided. Especially taking into consideration the pillar on perpetrators as ordinary men and women, simplified explanation models are not used. While the descriptions are short, different aspects of each group or person are named (what they did

¹⁶⁷ Marek Sengers, interview with author, Vught, June 12, 2018.

before the war, during the war, what happened afterwards). Moreover, because of the different media used, the creation of distance and fascination is balanced. On the one hand, the objects and photos might create fascination, but this is counteracted by the explanatory texts that are used. One last note must be made, however. Everything is dependent on which pillars the visitor actually looks at. They are set up in a way that there is no one clear path, so that, effectively, the visitor can choose which pillars they want to see. Generally, a visitor will only see part of them. Depending on which pillars the visitor sees, this might undermine the positive factors I named.

Coming back to the visitor guide which states that the museum wants to show that the history of camp Vught is one of experience and choices, I think they have only partly succeeded. To quote it:

The history of camp Vught is more than a story of numbers and facts. It is the story of *experiences and choices*. The permanent exhibition centralises the personal experience during the war years. The *victims, perpetrators, resistance fighters and bystanders* of then were people like us. In an extreme time they were confronted with themselves and had to face dilemmas. We show you their *different choices and responses*. [my emphasis]¹⁶⁸

In the first documentary exhibition perpetrators (and bystanders) are almost left out of the picture. While some personal stories are included, they are hardly representative. The second documentary exhibition, the one with the pillars, has a much broader focus on personal stories, also those of perpetrators. However, while biographies are included, these mostly focus on what the person did before during and after the war and not on why they did this. Of course, this information is hard to acquire, but the exhibition could at least raise questions about it. What is missing from these stories and in the exhibition as a whole is the thematization of choices, of room for action. While presenting individual stories is a

¹⁶⁸ Uijland, Tijen, Eijnde, *Eindpunt of tussenstation*, 7. Original: "De geschiedenis van kamp Vught is meer dan een verhaal van getallen en feiten. Het is het verhaal van lotgevallen en keuzes. In de permanente expositie staat de persoonlijke beleving tijdens de oorlogsjaren centraal. De slachtoffers, daders, verzetsstrijders en toeschouwers van toen waren mensen zoals wij. In een extreme tijd werden ze met zichzelf geconfronteerd en voor dilemma's geplaatst. Wij laten u hun uiteenlopende keuzes en reacties zien."

start, it would be even more productive to add more biographical elements to these. Why did these people end up where they were? Did they choose to work in camp Vught? Did they have to? What could they have done differently? Were there people that refused to work as a guard? A larger focus on choices such as these is what the museum wants to move towards in the new exhibition, which I will discuss later.¹⁶⁹ Maybe it is because of this that when you walk further through the route to the response wall, most responses contain some form of 'Never Again' or 'Never Forget'. It should be taken into account that after the two documentary exhibitions, the visitor sees the camp site with the reconstructed barracks, the former crematorium, and the monument for the children's transports. The responses on the response wall are probably based on the whole experience, not just on the two documentary exhibitions. However, the fact that they hardly show anything else than 'Never Again' and 'Never Forget' might be a sign that more work needs to be done to stimulate the visitor to reflect.

2.4 Permanent Exhibition National Monument Camp Amersfoort

The visitor centre of National Monument Camp Amersfoort is very small. In just one room, the visitor can see all of the exhibited items. In the middle, there is a scale model of the camp during the war around which people can stand, on the sides there are glass cases with objects from the camp period such as drawings made by former prisoners, archaeological finds, and other objects people have donated to the Monument over time. Furthermore, against the wall next to the entrance door there are some books visitors can buy, and a table with coffee and tea. Moreover, about a third of this space is filled with chairs so that visitors can sit and watch a film with victim testimonies or sometimes a lecture.¹⁷⁰ Lastly the wall that divides the exhibition space from the offices that are behind it, shows a long timeline of the camp. As it is now, there is no clear line in the exhibition except that it focuses on the former prisoners and there are hardly any explanatory texts

¹⁶⁹ Marek Sengers, interview with author, Vught, June 12, 2018.

¹⁷⁰ Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen*, 15.

on the history of the camp. The room seems closer to a place where objects are exhibited than to an actual exhibition. As such, there is not much space in visitor centre (there is a small building dedicated to camp commander Berg which I will discuss in the next chapter) that can be dedicated to the topic of perpetration, but there are elaborate plans for an expansion that will include an actual exhibition and does address the topic of perpetration. The direction, employees, and volunteers of the Monument, together with external parties, have thought about the way in which the message needs to be told. On the basis of a book that is made for possible investors, which I procured from the director Willemien Meershoek, I will discuss these future plans. While the plans are already quite concrete, first of all I should note that changes might still be made and the details are still unknown. However, the basis is there and will not change. Secondly, I should note that the book contains information that is presented in a way to get money, and is therefore not objective. However, since this is the only source I have, I will use this anyway, but with caution.¹⁷¹ Both the website and the book state:

The legacy of Camp Amersfoort demonstrates that democracy and human rights, peace and safety, social cohesion and living 'together' are not self-evident. Also not today. To cherish Camp Amersfoort as lieu de mémoire—the place where it happened—and to tell the stories of this place again and again in an appealing way and with attention for the context of WWII and the occupation of the Netherlands, requires us to make a connection with the changing world around us.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort, *Kamp Amersfoort: Plek die je raakt* (2018) The book states no clear author and speaks of 'The National Monument' or 'we', when stating ideas. I will stick to this same terminology, since the book conveys the message of the National Monument as a whole.

¹⁷² "Vernieuwingsplannen," Kamp Amersfoort, accessed June 25, 2018, <https://www.kampamersfoort.nl/vernieuwingsplannen/>. Original: "Het erfgoed waar Kamp Amersfoort voor staat, toont aan dat democratie en mensenrechten, vrede en veiligheid, sociale cohesie en 'samen' leven, geen vanzelfsprekendheid zijn. Ook vandaag niet. Het koesteren van Kamp Amersfoort als lieu de mémoire – de plek waar het gebeurd is - en het steeds weer op aansprekende wijze uitdragen van de verhalen van deze plek met aandacht voor de context van WOII en de bezetting van Nederland, vraagt om aansluiting bij de veranderende wereld om ons heen."

This changing world regards the new techniques that are now available but also the shift from communicative to cultural memory. The book states that the themes of the war are still relevant for the National Monument today and it wants to turn apathy into empathy, to show that being right or wrong has to do with personal choices, and to make the visitor conscious of universal themes connected to camp Amersfoort.¹⁷³ To make a visit relevant for today's visitors, the National Monument wants to make the camp's history a mirror for the present. Therefore, part of the National Monument will be a monument, a place to commemorate the events of the Second World War. Another part, however, will be focussed on the visitor. Basically, if the visitor decides to take the whole route that is planned, they will make a journey in which they are invited to remember, reflect, and think.¹⁷⁴ Because I think the whole experience is important for the context of my thesis, I will consider the whole plan (so including that which concerns the former terrain) here. In the next chapter, I will focus on the artist Armando's concept of 'guilty landscape' and the building on the place where the camp commander's office was.

The visitor's 'journey', as it is described, will start at the original gate of camp Amersfoort, which will be restored and made part of the National Monument.¹⁷⁵ The courtyard you then enter is described to embody "the physical essence of the camp: an enclosed space in which you are closed off from the outside world."¹⁷⁶ On the ground, visitors will see footprints, all in neat rows, reminiscent of prisoners on roll call. These footprints are supposed to represent the history of the place and the emptiness the prisoners have left. The idea is that a visitor can, for a moment, 'stand in the shoes of a

¹⁷³ Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort, *Kamp Amersfoort*, 12.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 14. Note: The Dutch says *herinneren*, *reflecteren* and *bezinnen*. The last two words are hard to translate into English, because both translate to reflect. In this text, the former means to reflect on oneself, and will be translated as 'reflection'. The latter comes closer to reflecting on the situation, on standing still after an impressive experience, and will be translated with the sadly not so eloquent 'thinking'.

¹⁷⁵ Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort, *Kamp Amersfoort*, 32.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 34. Original: "de fysieke essentie van het kamp: een omheinde ruimte waarin je afgesloten bent van de buitenwereld."

former prisoner', as it were, by placing their feet on one of the sets of footprints. The National Monument is in possession of camp commander Berg's boots, which will be used here too: opposite the footprints resembling a roll call, a casting of the soles of camp commander Berg's boots will be placed, so that a visitor can also decide to 'stand in his shoes'.¹⁷⁷ You can then cross the courtyard, see some more authentic objects, and descend into the exhibition space. There, the camp's history will be told through with the help of personal stories—if possible based on testimonies—that make this history less a story of just numbers and facts and therefore easier to identify with, which, as noted in the previous chapter, a trend in the museum industry. The personal stories together stand for a bigger story, which is not only one of victims, but also of perpetrators, bystanders, and people that helped the prisoners. The focus will not be on full biographical stories, but on those parts in the biography that are exemplary. Moreover, the exhibition space displays a scale model to make the camp more tangible. As said before, hardly anything is left of the three camps, and this scale model can give the visitor an idea of what building was where in the camp. Lastly, there will also be space for temporary exhibitions.¹⁷⁸ After the part called 'memory' the visitor has the choice to move to the space called 'reflection' or to immediately go the space for 'thinking', as they are called in the book.

In the reflection part, the visitors will first take a test that confronts them with their own day to day, possibly unintentional, prejudices. Then, it is made clear where these might come from: mass media and group pressure. Afterwards, the visitor will be isolated in a room in which they see recent images of transformation. An example that is described is the image of Afghan children transforming into warriors with a Kalashnikov. Next, the visitors will get some questions about what they would choose in certain dilemmas, both from the past and relevant to today. While the visitor is isolated during these tests, they will see the vision of several archetypes of the war, of victims, perpetrators, bystanders,

¹⁷⁷ In the next chapter I will discuss these boots in more detail, because they are now in a building on the former camp terrain, not in the documentary exhibition.

¹⁷⁸ Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort, *Kamp Amersfoort*, 36-48.

and helpers. These will give advice and test the visitor. Lastly, the visitor will be made aware of the answers they have given and the choices they have made. Then, they will join their family, friends, or classmates again where they are invited to reflect together.¹⁷⁹

While this is clearly an attempt at interactivity and at making connections between the history and legacy of the Holocaust and more recent and ongoing atrocities via the question of the perpetrator and perpetration, I believe that much caution is needed here. Firstly, it is unclear what the link with camp Amersfoort is except for the themes that are similar. The book notes that some of the individual experiences deal with camp Amersfoort, but not all. If only the themes are similar, I wonder whether camp Amersfoort is the right place to convey the message. However, Willemien Meershoek argues that learning about the past (which is what happens before the reflection space) makes people more open towards learning about the present and themselves. And in order to be able to reflect on their own choices, people need to be confronted with dilemmas of the present, not of the past. When you learn about the history of camp Amersfoort, you learn about what happens in times when some people have no rights. On the one hand, this enables you to respect your own freedom more, but it also teaches you that this freedom has a boundary. Your freedom can take away the freedom of others. This is what the perpetrator perspective can show us.¹⁸⁰ Still, to be able to productively show how Afghan children turn into 'war machines', a lot of context is needed. Care should be taken so that this experience will not be too immersive and hence risks being too intense for the visitor. While experience is a trend in the museum industry, there is a moral limit for war museums. They cannot re-enact the war or traumatize their visitors. The book for investors is unfortunately not clear on what exactly will happen in this 'reflection' space, therefore, further analysis is difficult.

Lastly, the visitor will be given time to stand still and reflect on what they have seen and experienced. After the reflection experience, visitors will enter a room underneath the footprints on roll call, which are now above your head instead of underneath your feet. The

¹⁷⁹ Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort, *Kamp Amersfoort*, 50-6.

¹⁸⁰ Willemien Meershoek, interview with author, Amersfoort, June 14, 2018.

footprints are made in a way that they let through light, which means that if someone stands on them above the ground, you can see the light change underneath it. After having taken the time to stand still, you ascend to the courtyard again where you can decide to visit the rest of the terrain, go to the café, visit the courtyard again or end the visit.¹⁸¹

In sum, the National Monument has decided to use the place to both commemorate what happened and to teach human rights values. Within this, the focus is not only on victims, but on everyone involved. This means that the future permanent exhibition will not only be partly about perpetrators, but also possibly actually include the perpetrator perspective, for instance in the form of a citation of a former camp commander. From the book about the future plans, it is, however, unclear how the perpetrators will be described, except from concretising the larger story by showing they were individuals that made their own choices. What does become clear, is that overall the goal is to show that actions were and are based on personal choices, also of perpetrators.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, all three permanent documentary exhibitions are very different. While Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork has no exhibition that focuses on the system of National Socialism, perpetration is thematised in their permanent exhibition in an adequate way. It is shown that perpetrators are not by nature evil, but that people had a choice. Moreover, the system is described and the visitor is motivated to reflect on themselves through use of personal stories of all groups that had something to do with camp Westerbork. However, because the overriding reaction of the visitor is often to feel empathy for the victim, simply because this is easier, or more comfortable, the thematization of perpetration is not enough. At the moment, it is too easy to just skip these parts and only focus on the former prisoners. Camp Vught National Memorial has chosen to make two permanent documentary exhibitions, which are very different from each other. The first one is about the prisoners in the camp and while it includes some information about perpetration, most

¹⁸¹ Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort, *Kamp Amersfoort*, 62.

of it is presented in an overly simplified way. The next room makes up for this by thematising the whole National Socialist system. Perpetration is thematised here in a cross-medial manner, since many forms of presentation are used to convey the message. The room is designed to stage a feeling of the workings of the system, uses many authentic objects, text, photos, video, interactive maps. Moreover, many ways of describing the perpetrator or perpetration are used. Sadly, what undermines the message is that there is no clear path to walk. As a visitor you can decide for yourself which pillars to look at. On the one hand, this makes it easier to suit everyone's needs. On the other hand, even though many forms of media and techniques are used to thematise perpetration, the message you get still very much depends on what pillars you look at. National Monument Camp Amersfoort is, at this moment, too small to really be able to include perpetration as a theme in the exhibition.

Coming back to the beginning of the chapter, although Adorno already stated the need for education about perpetrators and perpetration in the 1960s, the memorial centres have been slow to incorporate perpetration in their exhibitions. All of the permanent exhibitions are from between 1999 and 2004 and while perpetration is thematised, this is often not done adequately or with enough context. However, we have already seen that National Monument Camp Amersfoort has concrete plans for an expansion of its exhibition space and the creation of a new permanent exhibition that includes the thematization of perpetration. From the interviews I conducted at the two other places, I learned that these also have concrete plans to expand and/or renew their permanent exhibitions. Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork has two reasons. Firstly, the Memorial Centre currently cannot handle the number of visitors anymore and hence needs expansion. Secondly, the new presentation should get a more stimulating function that refers to the historical place in order to create more unity between the Memorial Centre and the former camp terrain three kilometres further down.¹⁸² As of now, it is unclear how the new exhibition will look like. What is clear is that it will include guards and the organisation of the camp, probably not

¹⁸² Herinneringscentrum kamp Westerbork, "Jaarverslag 2017," April 2018, 7.

more or less than in the current exhibition.¹⁸³ Camp Vught National Memorial is, like Amersfoort, clear on its function of making citizens aware of their own responsibilities and freedom of choice in the current society.¹⁸⁴ In order to be able to thematise this, choices will be much more prominent in the new exhibition. As Sengers notes, it is important what choice you make at what moment, even if they are just small choices such as deciding to help someone who has fallen, or to visit your neighbour who might be lonely. To be able to thematise this, personal stories of former prisoners, perpetrators, and bystanders will be leading in the new exhibition.¹⁸⁵ To conclude, in the plans for the new exhibitions there seems to be much more room for the thematization of perpetration.

¹⁸³ Bas kortholt, interview with author, Hooghalen, April 20, 2018.

¹⁸⁴ "National Monument Kamp Vught vernieuwt," Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught, July 9, 2018, accessed July 14, 2018, <https://www.nmkampvught.nl/vernieuwing/>.

¹⁸⁵ Marek Sengers, interview with author, Vught, June 12, 2018

Chapter 3

The Thematization of Perpetration in Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork, Camp Vught National Memorial, and National Monument Camp Amersfoort: Other Documentary Exhibitions

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I have discussed the permanent documentary exhibitions. This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter, in the sense that it, too, discusses the thematization of perpetration in documentary exhibitions. However, the exhibitions discussed in this chapter are more recent and the last one is temporary one. The first is the exhibition I will discuss is *Als muren konden spreken* (If Walls Could Speak) in Barracks 1B in Vught. It is not part of the main route, but can be accessed with the same ticket and is advertised well in the Memorial. This exhibition was opened in 2013 and is supposed to be permanent. Lastly, this chapter analyses a temporary exhibition in Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork, called *De bewakers van Westerbork* (The Guards of Westerbork). This exhibition was held from October 2016 to April 2017.

3.2 Barracks 1B: a post-war history of camp Vught

As became clear in the introduction of this thesis, former camp Vught has only one original barracks left. This barracks, number 1, was not used to house prisoners but was used as a post office, a canteen, and a camp shop. It was saved from demolition, because at that time it was used as a church for the Moluccan community that had lived there since 1951.¹⁸⁶ In 2001 the barracks got the status of national monument. In 2013, the barracks was restored and part B (all barracks had a part A and B) has been made into a museum exhibition. However, while the barracks was restored, the interior of the barracks has not been reconstructed. Because of its layered history the question would be to which period it should be reconstructed. The barracks was first part of the concentration camp (1943-

¹⁸⁶ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 167.

1944), then of the evacuee camp for German civilians that lived too close to the fighting (1944-1945) and of the internment camp for members of the NSB and other people that (were suspected to have) collaborated with the occupier (1944-1949). Lastly, from 1951 onwards, it was part of a Moluccan residence. On the 27th of November 2013 the barracks' exhibition *Als muren konden spreken* (If Walls Could Speak) was officially opened. The exhibition is made by the agency Rietbroek Oudijn Ontwerpers in collaboration with Camp Vught National Memorial. As the text on the wall says: "This is the story of Barracks 1B." The exhibition shows the history of the *place*, it illustrates what it was like to live there and what the consequences were afterwards. The exhibition covers the four periods thematically, each period given an equal amount of attention, with subjects such as coming to Vught, daily life, free time activities, contact with the outside world, etcetera. Each theme is presented in a separate block that you can walk around which displays objects, photos, videos, audio fragments, and explanatory texts. Each period has its own colour and accompanying dates so that during the whole exhibition there is a clear division between the time periods. Hence, you can decide to read about each time period when looking at a theme, but you can also easily decide to only concentrate on one period.

Interestingly, in the front part of the exhibition (although there is no set route) we can read a quote by Laurence de la Porte, the daughter of someone who was 'wrong' in the war who says: "Do not be so quick to judge. You also need the other side of the story if you want to prevent new wars."¹⁸⁷ It is not specified what this other side is, and I will assume here that it is the side of the perpetrator and or the collaborator. Yet, while it seems very reasonable that we need to know both sides of the story, this is only partly shown in the exhibition. The exhibition centralises what being or having been in the internment camp does with a person or family. While this is informative in a historical way, it does not tell why these people ended up in the camp. The exhibition was not made to thematise perpetration, so this citation feels out of place.

¹⁸⁷ I had to Google the name to know her relation to camp Vught.

In the exhibition, implicitly and sometimes explicitly the four periods are linked together. The first wall you are guided to makes clear that each of the inhabitants' lives is influenced by their stay in camp Vught. Moreover, it explains that all of their stories are about inclusion and exclusion, courage and betrayal, hope and despair, ideals and dreams, and a careful new start. Marek Sengers, who works on the annual programme, says that it is supposed to show the post-war history of the place. The exhibition shows, without passing judgement, that there are similarities between the several post-war periods.¹⁸⁸ Apart from the first wall, what foregrounds these similarities is the thematic set-up. Each theme is important for each different group, but each group is clearly separated from the other through the use of colours. The place where the similarities become most clear is in a video shown at the back. At the back wall, you can sit down to see a video. It consists of several statements of which you have to decide for yourself that they come from a representative from each of the four groups. Iris van Ooijen describes it:

Vague images of barbed wire, a prisoner in striped clothes, are alternated with a map of the camp and a Moluccan woman with child. The dark atmosphere is emphasised by heavy musical tones, that visitors can hear through headphones. Without introduction the first voice is heard: 'Horrible, that transport of children. You are powerless, 1296 children.' A while later someone else speaks: 'We were so helpless. Truly horrible. My childhood was over.' Yet another voice: 'It is so definite here, here you would end, in one way or another.' And lastly: 'you seem to be imprisoned. Only just different, but you are in a room.' These sentences come from consecutively a camp prisoner, a German evacuee, an internee and a Moluccan inhabitant of the residence and bring the several inhabitant histories together into one victim narrative.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Marek Sengers, interview by author, Vught, June 12, 2018.

¹⁸⁹ Ooijen, *Kampen als betwist bezit*, 210. Original: "Vage beelden van prikkeldraad, een gevangene in een streepjespak, worden afgewisseld door een plattegrond van het kamp en een Molukse vrouw met kind. De donkere sfeer wordt benadrukt door zware muzikale tonen, die bezoekers door koptelefoons horen. Zonder introductie klinkt een eerste stem: 'Afgrijselijk dat kindertransport. Je bent machteloos, 1296 kinderen.' Even later spreekt een ander: 'Wir waren so hilflos. Wirklich Schrecklich. Dar war meine Kinderzeit vorbei.' Weer een andere stem: 'Het is hier zo definitief, hier zou je eindigen op de een of andere manier.' En ten slotte: 'Het lijkt alsof je gevangen zit. Net anders, maar je zit in een kamer.' Deze uitspraken van achtereenvolgens een kampgevangene, een Duitse evacu e, een ge interneerde en een Molukse bewoner van het woonoord brengen de verschillende bewoningsgeschiedenissen samen tot  e n slachtoffernarratief."

I agree with van Ooijen that this video foregrounds a narrative of victimisation for all groups. The boundaries between the groups are especially unclear in this video, only distinguished by vague images on the wall and the different voices, not by the colours that are used in the rest of the exhibition. This is problematic in the case of the internment camp period, because while some of the internees might have indeed been victims of the situation as we will see later, a large group was interned for a good reason.

The victim narrative is also implicitly present in other places. I will here only discuss the parts that focus on the internment camp period. Prominent in the whole exhibition are personal stories, because these make tangible what effect having been in camp Vught had on someone. Six stories of internees of the internment camp or their families are woven through the exhibition. In short, there are two stories about German families living in the Netherlands (*Rijksduitsers*), one on someone who founded a fascist political party, one on someone who joined that party, one on a child who joined the Hitler Youth and one on an eastern front soldier. Each of these stories mainly illustrate what living in the internment camp meant and what the consequences afterwards were. Whereas the stories are not meant to pass a judgement on whether the subjects had been perpetrators, victims, or something else, I will show that the choices of stories often evoke a feeling of victimhood.

Firstly, there are two narratives about Germans living in the Netherlands. Anneke Schute was born in 's-Hertogenbosch of German parents. Her father had lived and worked in the Netherlands for over thirty years, but had never officially applied for Dutch citizenship. From her story, we learn that Germans living in the Netherlands, despite of what they have or have not done, were interned immediately after the war. A panel explains that Anneke was released after two months, but had been a 'hostile subject' until 1948, which meant that she was not allowed to study in the Netherlands. A second narrative, that of the Luderer-Wolf family, appears three times in the exhibition. You can see original letters written by the grandfather of the family, trying to get his daughter and grandchild released. The explanatory text notes that he succeeded after two months, but that their house and furniture had been confiscated. Moreover, it is described what the family did and had to do during the war. For example, the little boys had to go to a German

school, even though they spoke only Dutch. Next to this information, two drawings and a family photo are displayed. Lastly, there is a sign that explains what happened to the family after the war. They lost their house, but “fortunately, they were offered a place to stay by their former neighbours.” All in all, because the Luderer-Wolf family comes back so often in the exhibition, great emphasis is placed on Germans living in the Netherlands. It is implied that neither family has done anything wrong and that they were only interned because they were German. On the one hand, telling these stories is productive because they complicate the standard idea that might exist of interned people; that they must have done something wrong. Germans living in the Netherlands were often victims, but were unjustly seen as perpetrators by the Dutch. On the other hand, because the two families are so prominent in the exhibition there is a risk that the visitors equate their stories with those of others in the internment camp who *did* do something wrong and were indeed perpetrators.

To counteract this, there are also four narratives on Dutch citizens that were interned. Although this opens up the discussion on collaboration, which is laudable and only very recent, the characters that are chosen are still rather problematic. In an article on thematising collaboration in Dutch museums Erik Schumacher notes that

to bring collaboration closer to the visitor, it seems to be attractive for museums to reserve the individual perspective for characters that played no role in the persecution of the Jews. . . . They often tell the story from the point of view of a child—also because for museums children are an important target audience—because of which the emphasis often lays more on pain and victimhood than on guilt and responsibility. In this way an image of collaboration can rise that is not necessarily untrue, but that is incomplete.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Schumacher, “Oog in oog met de collaborateur,” 10. Original: “Om collaboratie voor bezoekers dichterbij te brengen, blijkt het voor musea aantrekkelijk om het individuele perspectief te reserveren voor personages die geen rol hebben gespeeld in de Jodenvervolging. . . . Ze vertellen het verhaal vaak vanuit het oogpunt van een kind – ook omdat kinderen voor musea een belangrijke doelgroep zijn – waardoor de nadruk meer op leed en slachtofferschap komen te liggen dan op schuld en verantwoordelijkheid. Op die manier kan een beeld van collaboratie rijzen dat niet per se onwaar is, maar wel onvolledig.”

Only one of the four stories escapes this problem. Firstly, there are the stories of Arnold Meijer, who founded the Black Front Fascist League in 1934, and Sjef Paijman, who joined this party. The exhibition does not detail what these men actually did before and during the war except from being a member or founder of this party. Moreover, it is stated that when the Black Front Fascist League was not allowed anymore, Meijer refrained from politics, which implies he had nothing to do with the persecution of the Jews. Secondly, we can read the story of Dick Woudenberg, whose parents were very nationalistic. When Dick was seven, he joined the Youth Storm, the NSB's counterpart of the *Hitlerjugend*. In 1945, he was interned in Vught. Because he was only a child during the war, he is easily seen as a victim of the circumstances. The only narrative that escapes the problem Schumacher describes it that of the Eastern front soldier G. Westertak. Unfortunately, this is not an individual biography, but just a citation that is only available in Dutch.¹⁹¹ Translated the quote says: "Most of the internees had been soldiers. They did not fight for Germany, but for their own country, against communism. Is it such a crime to fight against the enemy of Christianity? We are no traitors! We love our country just as much as those outside the camp."¹⁹² This citation is placed without any real context. There is no information on what Eastern front soldiers actually did and who they fought for, so only for the visitor that has an idea about this the story on collaboration is nuanced. Generally, Eastern front soldiers are seen as inherently bad, because they fought for the Germans, but this citation shows that at least some of them thought they did not necessarily fight for the Germans, but against communism, which means fighting for the Netherlands. Yet, without contextualisation and other accounts of Eastern Front Soldiers, this quote does little more than again foregrounding a victim narrative.

¹⁹¹ All text of the exhibition is in both Dutch and English, except for some citations that are displayed without contextual information.

¹⁹² Original: "Het grootste deel der gedetineerden is soldaat geweest. Ze vochten niet voor Duitsland, maar voor hun eigen land, tegen het communisme. Is het dan zoo'n grooten misdaad om tegen den vijand van het christendom te strijden? Wij zijn geen verraders! Wij hebben ons land even lief als zij die buiten het kamp zijn."

A last personal story is that of the daughter of a member of the NSB. She was born in the internment camp and when she and her mother were released they had no home. A panel describes that in the 1980s she found comfort in the *Stichting Werkgroep Herkenning* (Foundation for Acknowledgement) which is a foundation for children of 'wrong' parents. Moreover, a picture of her is shown in which she is in front of a class telling her story. Visitors can also watch a video of someone whose grandfather was a member of the NSB. She did not know this until she was in her late twenties, when she started doing research on him. These two stories show the effect of having been in the internment camp can have on later generations and make the exhibition more relevant to the present. In itself, that this perspective is included is very interesting, because for a long time children of 'wrong' parents kept quiet about their heritage. Yet, whereas this narrative is very important for the current generations of descendants of people that have lived in the internment camp, it adds to the overall victim narrative.

Lastly, some of the objects in this exhibition work together with the text to illustrate the personal stories. Reproductions of portrait photos give a face to the people whose stories are told and as stated above, for example some personal letters are displayed. Many of the other objects are displayed in a way to connect to the other periods. While the colours in the background always make clear which period you are reading about or looking at, the objects are often presented next to each other without a barrier. For example, a block that deals with the theme of leisure time presents booklets about plays in the internment camp, with next to that booklets about plays in the other periods.

In conclusion, the exhibition in Barracks 1B tells the story of the place. From the three ways of thematising perpetration Jelitzki and Wetzels describe, this exhibition clearly centralises the local historical situation. What did living there mean and what does it do to someone? In that sense, the exhibition does not thematise perpetration as such, but some of the people that the exhibition centres on were perpetrators and during one of the periods the camp was an internment camp for (possible) perpetrators. Because of the overall structure, the exhibition does not succeed in creating a neutral story, which is what it aims to do. Because the exhibition is about four periods, and all four periods are shown equally,

the feeling is created that the people living in the internment camp might all have been victims. While it is true that all groups have in common that they did not voluntarily live in the place, many people in the internment camp were there for the reason they were actually perpetrators. Moreover, the personal stories used in the exhibition either are about people that were unjustly interned (the German people living in the Netherlands), and otherwise they are not about people who actually had something to do with the persecution of the Jews. What is done well in the exhibition is that the different personal stories concretise the experiences of many different groups in the internment camp (although Germans living in the Netherlands do have the upper hand in the exhibition). Moreover, what is interesting is that the perspective of next generations is added. Having lived in the internment camp has not only had an effect on the people itself, but also on their relatives.

3.3 Temporary Exhibition: The Guards of Westerbork

From the 22th of October 2016 until the 17th of April 2017, the temporary exhibition *De bewakers van Westerbork* (The Guards of Westerbork) was shown in the Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork. The main source for the exhibition was Frank van Riet's book of the same name. As is noted on the memorial centre's website, there are numerous books on camp Westerbork, but the organisation of the camp and its guarding have never really been touched upon before.¹⁹³ My analysis of this exhibition will be divided into three parts. First, I will analyse the message of this exhibition on the basis of an interview with Bas Kortholt and the video that is shown in the beginning of the exhibition. Then, I will consider the use of photos in the exhibition. Lastly, I will consider the text and testimonies used.

In the interview I conducted with Bas Kortholt, researcher for the Memorial Centre, he made clear that *The Guards of Westerbork* was not an exhibition about perpetrators. The question is whether every guard even was a perpetrator.¹⁹⁴ The idea that being a

¹⁹³ "De bewakers van Westerbork," *Kamp Westerbork*, accessed June 11, 2018, <https://www.kampwesterbork.nl/nl/museum/tentoonstellingen/de-bewakers-van-westerbork/index.html#/index>.

¹⁹⁴ Bas Kortholt, interview by author, Hooghalen, April 20, 2018.

guard is not morally black or white was emphasized from the beginning of the exhibition, which was housed in one rectangular room. Immediately on the left wall the visitor could see a large screen which showed storyteller Eric Borrias telling a fragmented story on the 'cogs of the system'.¹⁹⁵ The question the story deals with is how one becomes a cog in a system and whether it is possible to say who is guilty and who is not. The story is told from several perspectives, but mostly that of camp commander Gemmeker and other guards reflecting on their positions and actions. Throughout the story the bystanders also have a voice: "You had a choice!" Borrias shouts several times. Afterwards, this is contrasted with something a guard could have said, (for example, "OD or SS, let us [the OD] do it then...") but in a much more reserved, softer, voice. On the one hand, when the visitor listens to the whole story, it becomes clear that there is a greyscale between the black and white. On the other hand, because the room was rather small and 'you had a choice' is shouted, this was the only sentence hearable in the whole exhibition room, and hence set the tone for the rest of the exhibition.

The rest of the exhibition consisted of three rings, as it were. The outer and middle ring had large panels, almost reaching the ceiling, with text and pictures and in the outer ring some objects were displayed. The outer ring displayed information about the system of the occupier in the Netherlands; the context needed to understand what happened in camp Westerbork. There was a panel on the SS, on the *Waffen-SS*, on the *Ordnungs-* or *Grüne Polizei*, one on the Military police and police, on the *Ordedienst*, and lastly one on the Police Battalion Amsterdam. The ring within that, which had the same large panels, illustrated how the guarding of camp Westerbork happened through panels on the camp commandants, and all the previously named groups except for the SS. The middle ring consisted of poles with headphones on which the visitor could listen to testimonies of either people that knew a certain guard or a guard itself. Lastly, within these listening poles there are smaller panels with photos of Jews in several situations, such as family photos but also

¹⁹⁵ The video can now be seen on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bASIQ8SZTQ>.

of a group of Jews getting in a train.



Figure 5. Inner circle of exhibition The Guards of Westerbork in Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork. April 2017.

Photos were one of the most prominent features in this exhibition. Most panels displayed many photos, sometimes life-size, often in the form of a collage. A watchtower

is shown, but most photos depicted at least one guard. The guards were shown in many situations, such as guiding people into a train, posing as a group (during either work time or leisure time), posing for a portrait, or marching. Most of the time, faces are easily recognisable. However, usually there was no description for the photos, except some general notes at the top of a panel, stating where the pictures were taken or what action can be seen in them (for example "the first transports from camp Westerbork" or "raids in Amsterdam"¹⁹⁶). It is not explained who the people depicted are. What is also noteworthy is that while the guards are depicted in several different locations and doing several different things, they are always depicted in uniform. On the one hand, depicting the guards in their uniforms, especially posed photos, reproduces self-staged images and adheres "to their wish to be shown in positions of power and give no indication of their later defeat."¹⁹⁷ On the other hand, it is understandable in this exhibition, because it is about the guards in function. Depicting them in uniform shows the guards as they are talked about in the exhibition. Moreover, the pictures of the guards are contrasted with photos in the middle ring that are clearly different people than the guards. While these photos also have no descriptions, it is clear that they are pictures of prisoners of camp Westerbork. One of the photos, for example, is a portrait of Anne Frank. Because of this contrast, sensationalising (the crimes of) the guards is avoided; the visitor is always made aware of the consequences of the guards' actions.

The exhibition aimed to give the visitor the context needed to create an informed opinion on the guards of Westerbork. Frank van Riet's work that served as the basis for this exhibition showed that there were many different groups that guarded the camp in some form. All these groups were described in this exhibition. On the one hand, the local historical situation is described through the stories of the groups: what they did during the war, how they acted, who gave them their orders, what others thought of them, and

¹⁹⁶ Original: "De eerste transporten vanuit kamp Westerbork" and "Razzia's in Amsterdam".

¹⁹⁷ Pearce, "The Role of German Perpetrator Sites," 170.

sometimes why people would decide to join a group. On the other hand, the more general historical situation is described, in order to understand why the guards were even needed. All in all, in comparison with other exhibitions, such as the permanent exhibition in the memorial centre, this exhibition had a lot of text. The booklet that was provided when a visitor wants to read the English text, has ten full pages of text. Considering the text only consists of raw facts about different groups of people, it is a lot to process, especially recognising that when visiting the exhibition, text is not the only thing the visitor has to process. There were also some objects, many photos, and some videos. This was a conscious choice of the makers, though. Because, as said before, not a lot was known about the guards of Westerbork, not even by researchers. Hence, the makers of the exhibition assumed that the visitor would need a lot of context to be able to reflect on their own prejudices of the guards of camp Westerbork in an informed way.¹⁹⁸ And yet, while there is a lot of text, it is often still not enough to let the visitor come to an informed opinion. For example, when the regular staff of SS members is described, the only thing the visitor can read is that the staff "chiefly consisted of wounded soldiers from the Eastern Front. They manned the switchboard, did administrative tasks or worked as drivers or mechanics. Later on, this SS received a more general, controlling task and they supervised the transports and the barracks."¹⁹⁹ Clearly, the focus is on the organisational structure and on the guards in function rather than on why individuals made certain choices or how they ended up there. Considering this piece of text might be the only thing the visitor now knows of the SS group this makes it hard to be able to reflect on questions of guilt or responsibility, which *is* what the video in the beginning of the exhibition suggests will be created space for in the exhibition.²⁰⁰ What might help the visitor reflect on groups or individuals are the listening poles in the middle. After having read all (or some) of the

¹⁹⁸ Bas Kortholt, interview by author, Hooghalen, April 20, 2018.

¹⁹⁹ "The Guards of Westerbork," *exhibition text*, Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork.

²⁰⁰ However, based on the exhibition a symposium was organised which reflected on many difficult questions that could not be answered in the exhibition.

information, the visitor can listen to testimonies on certain guards or sometimes by guards. These testimonies show that there is often not *one* opinion about a guard. One person might say that a certain guard saved his life, and another person might say that that same guard has abused him or her brutally. Hearing these different stories might prompt the visitor to reflect on questions of guilt, room for acting a certain way, making choices, etcetera.

In sum, the exhibition succeeded in informing the visitor on the historical situation and the guards of Westerbork and hence in complicating the narrative on the guards of Westerbork. However, I believe it was less successful in prompting reflection. On the whole, a balanced, complicated narrative of the guards of Westerbork was created. Therefore, there was no more room for detailed reflection or questions. Because so much facts are needed, the exhibition risks creating too much distance. The visitor already had to process so much information, that the risk is that visitors are too tired to be open to reflection. What would have helped to reach the most people is to explicitly raise some questions so that visitors do not have to come up with them, but 'only' have to answer them. Moreover, for a broader audience, it would be productive to choose to focus on for example one or two groups, so that for example also the process of radicalisation through ideology might be shown, or more focus might be put on why certain people might have made certain choices.

3.4 Conclusion

The two exhibitions analysed in this chapter illustrate that the memorial centres increasingly open to thematising perpetration. While Barracks 1B does not centralise perpetration but the place itself, a large part of the people that were in the internment camp were perpetrators. Moreover, the exhibition opens up the discussion on the later generations of people that have lived in the camp, which is something that is only very recently done. Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork seems the most willing to include perpetration in its exhibitions. *The Guards of Westerbork*, too, does not use the term perpetrator and presents the narrative in a way so that visitors can come to their own

conclusions. However, this does not mean that the exhibition does not thematise perpetration. Avoiding to use the term perpetrator will hopefully lead to reflection on the guards, because while they can all be described as perpetrators simply because they were guards, there are many factors that complicate the situation and move them towards a greyscale. Moreover, because of the Memorial Centre's collaboration with the iC-ACCESS research project, other projects have also been set up and are being set up. For example, for two weeks in October 2017 visitors to the Memorial Centre could see a 3D reconstruction of camp Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen. You could 'walk' through the reconstruction and click on certain buildings which would then give you more information. Since a large focus of the iC-ACCESS project is contested memory, many of the informational items were about perpetration. While this was only a test and ran for two weeks, it shows the willingness of the Memorial Centre to include perpetration in the narrative.

Chapter 4

The Thematization of Perpetration in National Monument Camp Amersfoort, Camp Vught National Memorial, and Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork: The Former Camp Terrain

4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have shown how perpetration is thematised in the memorial or visitor centres of the former camps Amersfoort, Vught and Westerbork. However, the places do not only consist of this centre, they also include the (parts of) the former camp terrain that the centres have at their disposal. Only the Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork has the whole camp terrain at its disposal. Both the terrains of the former camp Vught and Amersfoort have been divided up into several parts, some of which are used for purposes that have nothing to do with the war past. This chapter will look at how the memorials thematise their perpetrator history on the part of the terrain they have at their disposal. The chapter will be divided in three themes. I will first discuss the concept of a guilty landscape. This concept was coined by the artist Armando who lived next to camp Amersfoort during the war and is a unique way of dealing with the past. Next, I will discuss how the memorial centres deal with buildings that are left on the terrain. On the terrain of the former camp Westerbork, the house of the camp commander occupies a very prominent place. Moreover, both the memorial centres of camp Vught and Westerbork organise tours that go past buildings that relate to their perpetrator history. Lastly, I will consider the use of objects on the terrain of the former camp Amersfoort, where the boots and desk of one of the camp commanders are presented.

4.2 Thematising Perpetration in Art: Guilty Landscape

Because of their link with the artist Armando, the visitor centre of camp Amersfoort has a way of dealing with perpetration unlike the other centres. Armando was born in 1929 as Henk Dirk Dodeweerd. During the war years he lived next to camp Amersfoort where he played in the forests. This experience of playing in the forest influenced his work in a

significant way: in all his work, Armando seems to be looking for the enemy, the perpetrator, and for evil.²⁰¹

Both in his literary work and in his paintings Armando declared the landscape to be 'guilty'. In one of his literary works he writes: "Guilty edge of the forest, yeah right, all well and good, but when you see how the forest let itself be pushed away back then for building the so called *barracks*, yes, then you just feel a sense of pity. But the rest of the forest remains guilty. It has seen and allowed everything, without saying a word. And it is still there: unmoved as ever."²⁰² Literary studies scholar Ernst van Alphen deems the interpretation that the landscape is a personification of the perpetrator impossible. While both can be seen as imperturbable, and hence Armando's work could be a complaint against humanity—humans are just as imperturbable as trees—not just any tree is guilty for Armando, only those that were present during the violence. Hence, the trees are not metaphors for the perpetrator, but indicators or indexes of violence that is used. The trees witnessed violence and war, but right now, they do not testify or actively tell about it. This is why they are guilty, because they cover up the traces of war and violence. They just keep growing. Because of them, the war becomes invisible.²⁰³ According to van Alphen, Armando's work shows the uniqueness of war experiences. His work only ever depicts what touched the war, its boundaries. It does not depict the destruction and violence itself, but that which was present. Through this, his work conveys that the actual war cannot be spoken of.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Erik Slagter, "De waarheid van Armando: Kunst als verzoening met de werkelijkheid," *Ons Erfdeel* vol. 30 (1987): 343, DBNL.

²⁰² Armando, *Aantekeningen over de vijand* (1981), quoted in Rob Schouten, "Armando 1929," in *'t Is vol van schatten hier...* ed. Anton Korteweg and Murk Salverda (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1986), 201. Original: "Schuldige bosrand, jaja, alles goed en wel, maar als je ziet hoe zo'n bos zich indertijd voor een deel opzij heeft laten dringen voor het bouwen van zgn. *barakken*, ja, dan bekruipt je even een gevoel van medelijden. Maar de rest van het bos blijft schuldig. Het heeft alles gezien en toegelaten, zonder een woord te zeggen. En het staat er nog: onbewogen als altijd."

²⁰³ Ernst van Alphen, *Armando: Vormen van herinnering* (Rotterdam: NAI uitgevers, 2000), 10-2.

²⁰⁴ Alphen, *Armando*, 9-10.

Apart from being an index for destruction, Armando's work *consists of* destruction. His sculptures erase form as it were. While you can see what they present, they do not do so in a natural way. Usually, it looks as if the sculptures are still very rough and unfinished. His drawings come into existence because of the violent tension between pencil and paper. Usually, they are nothing more than this, lines created because of this tension that look like a child made them. In his project, Armando tried to understand the violence of the past and stay in contact with it. Although his work is violent itself, it is also a complaint against it. According to him this is possible because of the difference between art and reality. When violence or evil is in the domain of art, it is not actual violence or evil anymore, it is art. This means that when violence is a part of art you can still experience violence, but no longer its consequences. His art is like a re-enactment of the violence, you get the experience but not the reality that involves consequences. Going back to the guilty landscape, Armando's goal is not the experience of violence, but remembering the violence from the past. Nature will not do it, so he will.²⁰⁵

Armando's art can be seen on the terrain of the National Monument camp Amersfoort. Since 2015, on the museum pavilion several photos by photographer Cara Louwman based on Armando's notion of guilty landscape can be seen. The photographs depict the landscape of camp Amersfoort with artworks of Armando integrated into them. However, at the moment, little explanation is given with these photos. Moreover, everyone that donates twenty-five euros gets a calendar made by Armando, those who donate thirty-five euros get a t-shirt with the text of his shortest poem, and those who donate 250 euros get a bronze sculpture of a tree leaf made by Armando.²⁰⁶ This is a very different way of dealing with perpetration than we have seen before. Instead of teaching about the history, or encouraging people to reflect on certain behaviours, it is a much more abstract way of dealing with perpetration. I think that on its own, Armando's art is too abstract to be presented in the memorial centre. While there is a meaning to the artworks, the meaning

²⁰⁵ Alphen, *Armando*, 145-6, 152-3.

²⁰⁶ "Financiële steun," Kamp Amersfoort, accessed June 2, 2018, <https://www.kampamersfoort.nl/zwart-zwart-t-shirt/>.

is closer to an emotion than to actual history. In other words, while the art commemorates the war, it does not teach about it. The photos as they are now presented on the terrain for example, only make sense if you know about Armando's art. Without an explanatory panel somewhere, it will probably be unclear for the visitor why they are presented on the terrain.²⁰⁷ In a memorial museum, both information and commemoration need to be present. Therefore, I think that as long as there are other ways of actually learning about the past in the visitor centre, Armando's art is a valuable addition. It shows that the past can evoke strong emotions and that art is one way of dealing with these emotions and of trying to understand the past.

4.3 Tracing the Perpetrator in Material Remnants: Buildings and Ruins

All three memorial centres display some attributes of Nazi power on their terrain. In Amersfoort one of the first things the visitor sees is an original watchtower, in Westerbork, a replica of this watchtower is in the back of the terrain, and Vught too, has some replicas of watch towers. Moreover, in Westerbork, for example, barbed wire is re-placed, as well as part of the ditch that used to be there. This can be seen in Vught too. Yet, in Vught and Westerbork these Nazi attributes are not really contextualised other than that throughout the narrative of the places it becomes clear that these are attributes used to keep the prisoners inside the camps. In Amersfoort the watchtower is part of the route the visitor is invited to follow. The visitor guide which you can take with you on the route explains that there used to be twelve watchtowers, four of which were near the camp where the staff was housed. The rest of the text details what the watchtower looked like and how the guards had to get in there. Furthermore, the text explains that when a prisoner would be too close to the barbed wire was shot and that some prisoners committed suicide by going too close to the gate. A guard would shoot, because this meant getting extra days off. Lastly, the text explains that the watchtower is restored several times and that this is the

²⁰⁷ The photos are also not contextualised in the tours or on the map with information you can get when visiting the site.

only of its sort that was saved in the Netherlands.²⁰⁸ Amersfoort has no other buildings related to perpetrators at its disposal, these have all been demolished. In Vught, as I will shortly show later, some buildings are left, but these do not belong to the memorial centre, but to the Van Brederode military base next door. In contrast to Amersfoort and Vught, there are quite some traces left in Westerbork—most importantly, of course, the house of the camp commander described in the introduction—but there are also some other traces left. Both Westerbork and Vught will be described below.

For a long time, the focus of the Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork was more on the documentary exhibition than on the historical ground of the former camp terrain. Both the awareness of the disappearing war generation and the idea, coming from the field of history education, that a place of persecution is a direct intermediary between past and present caused a shift towards the former terrain becoming increasingly important.²⁰⁹ While a reconstruction of the former camp terrain is impossible, because the camp and its buildings do not exist anymore, it is possible to bring back traces of the past that show the characteristics of the past, such as the fact that there was a forced community, the daily life, and the spatiality of the camp.²¹⁰ Moreover, the Memorial Centre now has some formerly unavailable original buildings at its disposal. On their website, the question is asked: how can you experience the lost, feel something that is not there anymore? Research has shown that a symbolic representation is not enough anymore. Authentic buildings and clearer traces are needed to be able to imagine the past.²¹¹

Fate has it that the only building that is still intact is not associated with the prisoners, but is the camp commander's house. During the occupation it "offered a panoptic

²⁰⁸ Stichting Nationaal Monument Kamp Amersfoort, *Bezoekersgids*, 13.

²⁰⁹ Rob van der Laarse, *Nooit meer Auschwitz? Erfgoed van de oorlog na Europa's eeuw van de kampen* (Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork, 2013), 6.

²¹⁰ Hijink, *Voormalige concentratiekampen*, 211-2.

²¹¹ "Herinrichting kampterrein," Kamp Westerbork, accessed May 20, 2018, <https://www.kampwesterbork.nl/museum/kampterrein/herinrichting/index.html#/index>.

view on the atrocities of the weekly transports to the East."²¹² While all other buildings were demolished, this house was saved because at the time a former KNIL soldier and his family lived there. In that sense, the history of the house is exemplary of how trivial the development of a certain place can be. Had no-one lived in the house during the 1970s, or had it not been a KNIL soldier, the house would probably not be there anymore. But it is still standing, and as described in the introduction, after the house had been empty for three years, the Memorial Centre got it for long lease in 2010. It needed long overdue maintenance, because the former inhabitants had not done any and the house was originally built in 1939 with the intention for it to remain standing only for about fifteen years. Initially, when the Memorial Centre got the house, it was unprotected in the woods. That this was very dangerous was proven by the squatters that lived in the house for a while. The fact that they lived there and for example made a fire in the fireplace that needed sweeping showed the Memorial Centre that measures were needed.²¹³ Dirk Mulder, director of the Memorial Centre, considers the house to be rare heritage of international cultural-historical importance with a large value for the memory of the Second World War. Moreover, it has a unique building style and use of material, hence the house is also of architectural-historical importance. For this reason, it had to be preserved, which is why the idea of a glass dome was thought of. In addition, the glass dome is part of the redesign of the camp terrain and its surroundings.²¹⁴ A glass dome would prevent vandalism and people going inside the house, moreover, it would spare the regular renovations and conservation matters that would otherwise be needed.²¹⁵ At the moment, while the dome

²¹² Dana Dolghin, Rob van der Laarse, and Zuzanna Dziuban, "Thinking Conflicted Heritage Through Campscapes," *Accessing Campscapes: Inclusive Strategies for Using European Conflicted Heritage*, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 32.

²¹³ Daan Groeneveld, "Glazen overkapping nieuw fenomeen," April 16, 2015, accessed June 27, 2018, <https://bouwuitvoering.nl/vernieuwing/glazen-overkapping-nieuw-fenomeen/>.

²¹⁴ "Overkapping commandantswoning 'Westerbork' onthuld," Kamp Westerbork, February 2, 2015, accessed June 26, 2018, <https://kampwesterbork.nl/nl/museum/nieuws/detail.html?id=40152#/index>.

²¹⁵ Groeneveld, "Glazen overkapping nieuw fenomeen."

can be entered on certain special occasions, the house is not accessible for the public. Having many visitors would create problems for the atmospheric humidity. The dome itself could possibly create these problems too, which is why it is well ventilated.²¹⁶ Because visitors cannot go inside, the Memorial Centre is working on a virtual reconstruction of the house together with SPECS (Pompeu Fabra University of Barcelona) and the University of Amsterdam, under the name of iC-ACCESS.²¹⁷ This model is scheduled to be finished in 2019.



Figure 6. Glass construction over camp commander's house in Westerbork. April 2018.

As can be seen in the picture, the construction is quite imposing. It is twelve metres high and thirty-six metres deep. According to the architect the new dome is positioned in such a way that the human scale and the relation with the landscape is staged again.²¹⁸ In my interpretation, the human scale can be found in twofold here. Both the house and the glass dome are made by people. Instead of making the glass construction in the style of the

²¹⁶ Groeneveld, "Glazen overkapping nieuw fenomeen."

²¹⁷ "Virtuele reconstructie commandantswoning," Kamp Westerbork, October 18, 2017, accessed June 27, 2018, <https://kampwesterbork.nl/nl/museum/nieuws/detail.html?id=43255#/index>.

²¹⁸ "Overkapping commandantswoning," Oving architecten, 2012, accessed June 25, 2018, <http://ovingarchitecten.nl/project/overkapping-commandantswoning-6/>.

house, it is very modern and uses different textures. It is a display case, which is made by humans for the purpose of preserving something that humans deem important. On the one hand, the construction makes the house visible. Before, it was hidden in the trees. To be able to make the construction, the nature around the house has been cut down. Now, the house is clearly marked. On the other hand, the glass cover keeps the house at a distance, which, according to the consolidation plan is exactly what it is meant to do. While a house like this is associated with humanness, it also symbolises secrecy and excitement, because hardly any of the inhabitants of the camp (before, during, and after the war), ever came close or inside the house. Because of the construction, the current visitor can also not go inside, which keeps this same secrecy alive.²¹⁹ Moreover, the human scale can be found in the history of the house. Although it was veiled in secrecy, people lived in it. While Gemmeke is not the only person who lived in the house, its inhabitant history is often reduced to Gemmeke. The house is known as 'the camp commander's villa'. This humanises the perpetrator through showing the perpetrator perspective. While Gemmeke (the other camp commanders did not live in the house) was a camp commander during the war and therefore committed horrible crimes, in the house he was human. The house is painted in a nice green colour, you can see the curtains through the windows, and can almost imagine the garden that surrounded it. He lived there, slept there, ate there, spent his free time there. In other words, he did things that are considered human. In that sense, it is the perpetrator perspective itself that is shown. Looking at the house, you can almost imagine what it was like to live there, maybe to stand on the balcony and see the camp.

The relation with nature is staged too, because the construction is made of glass. This causes the visitor to be able to look through the whole construction towards the house, but also further, towards the nature behind it. Moreover, the glass reflects the nature surrounding the construction in an eerie way, so that whenever you look at the house, you will see the landscape in twofold, both through the glass and in the glass. This reminds of the past, because before the construction was built, the house was almost hidden between

²¹⁹ Robert Nijhuis, Rolf Bos, Marco Martens, and Jan Dijkstra, *Consolidatieplan Commandantwoning HcKW*, 3.3.

nature, its green colour maybe even contributing to this. In this sense, it resonates with Armando's concept of guilty landscape. The landscape just kept on growing, covering the house, covering the history of the violence that happened in it or could be seen from the house. Now, even though you can look through the glass, nature still covers the house in a sense, because you will always also see its reflection in the glass.

In one way, constructing a glass cover for the house fits the current trend of bringing back authenticity on the camp terrain so that visitors can more easily imagine the past. The house is not the only remnant of the past that is made visible on the terrain. For example, a train wagon can now be seen on the terrain too, as well as a partly reconstructed barracks. In that way, a balance is created between perpetrator and victim heritage. However, when we compare the visibility of the barracks and train wagon with that of the house, there is a clear discrepancy. While the barracks and train wagons are very much in the middle of the terrain and therefore quite visible, the house is even more visible. The house is the first building you pass when you enter the terrain from the side of the museum. Immediately on the left, you see the only house with a big glass construction around it. Furthermore, it is the only building or monument that has its own exhibition on the terrain. Daan Groeneveld, who wrote a blog on the glass construction, notes that almost unavoidably, the visitor will now first see the dome and only then the house. Furthermore, Dirk Mulder has called it the biggest museum display cabinet of the Netherlands.²²⁰ In a way, then, you could say that Gemmeker, because he is the camp commander who lived in the 'camp commander's villa', is put on display. The danger is that this creates a fascination for Gemmeker or the figure of the camp commander. Before, I said that the visitor might be able to imagine what it was like to live in the house, maybe even to stand on the balcony that looked over the camp. While this fits with the trend of identification, we can question whether this is desirable. If this imagination leads to fascination, it is a problem.

²²⁰ Groeneveld, "Glazen overkapping nieuw fenomeen."

To counter this, next to the house and on the other side of the path, near where the *Kommandantur* was, panels with information are placed. On the first one, it says that until the 31st of March 2017, you can see *The Guards of Westerbork* in the Memorial Centre, and that on the camp terrain, some people are presented that lived or worked in one of the two buildings. As Bas Kortholt told me during the interview, the choice for the presentation of people instead of groups like in the Memorial Centre has to do with the type of visitors that visit the site and Memorial Centre. For example, the exhibition on guards in the Memorial Centre was made specifically for the winter. During winter, the people often make the conscious decision to come visit the Memorial Centre and are therefore possibly more open to learning complex information. During the summer, there are much more tourists that visit the Memorial Centre as part of their leisure activities.²²¹ For the camp terrain, too, goes that a large number of people might visit it as part of their leisure activities. Because it is open and free, they might in first instance not even be aware that they are on the terrain of the former camp Westerbork. This means that many people visiting the camp terrain will probably have a shorter attention span. Display panels on specific people are likely an 'easier read' and hence more people will actually read them.

Next to the camp commander's house, there are four panels. The first contains the information I just explained, the next three describe the three camp commanders. All of the panels have the same structure. On the left, three pictures are shown of the specific camp commander, mostly in uniform, but not always posed. On top, in the middle, a very short citation is shown that describes each of the commanders, source not presented. From these citations it becomes clear that the first two camp commanders were seen as the stereotypical SS leaders, cold, harsh, often drinking alcohol. Gemmeker, on the other hand is described both as a gentleman and as a cold-blooded rogue. The middle of the panels consists of three columns, one on the commanders' (political and work) life before Westerbork, one on their work in camp Westerbork, and one on what they did after. Each of the descriptions is factual and describes what their jobs were, what they were

²²¹ Bas Kortholt, interview with author, Hooghalen, April 20, 2018.

responsible for, and why they left Westerbork. Lastly, these factual stories are juxtaposed with personal ones of prisoners of the camp, presented on the right of the panel. To the right (when facing the camp terrain) there are some more panels. These panels are in front of the former *Kommandantur*, the secretariat of the German camp leaders, which is now symbolically shown with a slope that outlines the former building. One of the panels describes that this building housed services that kept the camp going, such as a department for the purchase of food. The four other panels are just like the ones on the camp commanders. Each panel has a factual story about a person that worked in the *Kommandantur*, juxtaposed with a personal story of a prisoner, and complemented with three pictures on the left.

The camp commander's house is also included in a bicycle/walking tour called *Neighbours, Guards, Residents & Controversial Traces* that the Memorial Centre created together with iC-ACCESS. This tour takes you past several controversial places that can be found on and around the camp terrain. A booklet for this tour can be found online on the website of iC-ACCESS or at the Memorial Centre. The booklet shows the direction, sometimes including some notes on where you are walking or cycling. Moreover, for each point of information, three forms of information are given. First, you can read about the point of information from a factual standpoint. For example, at the first point, the Heidelager, you can read:

The Heidelager consisted of six barracks with living and sleeping areas, built in a double V shape around a paved area for group gatherings. This was a typical building style for job-creation camps at that time. In January, 1942, newly arrived German-Jewish refugees were the first residents. After the Nazi occupation, the Heidelager was consecutively inhabited by the SS-Wachtbatallion Nord-West, the Marechaussee (Dutch Military Police) and the Dutch Police Battalion.²²²

Next to this, a quotation is placed from someone (mostly former prisoners) about the point of information or something that happened there. Next to that, space is given to complicate the story; the controversy of the traces is actually explained. To take the first point of

²²² Camp Westerbork Memorial Centre, University of Amsterdam, iC-ACCESS, *Neighbours, Guards, Residents & Controversial Traces*, (2017), 4.

information again, here, a story is told about Herman Paridaen, the guard of the camp prison. The text states that outside the camp prison he was harsh for prisoners, but inside the prison he gave them extra food. The question is then asked, was he 'right' or 'wrong'? Moreover, the route leads you past the original entrance, where it is noted that scholars debate about the question of the moral responsibility of bystanders. These complications are of course just starting points, they prompt questions that you might discuss when taking the route, or even look into afterwards. The rest of the route takes you past the commander's house, the *Kommandantur*, the SD bunker (used for the storage of weapons), the crematorium, the resistance grave, the internment camp cemetery (where ten internees were buried), 'De Schattenberg' camp farm, the water purification plant, the potato cellar and the shooting range (built after the war for the military). Of these, all points of information include a contested story. Four of them are really about perpetrators. While I am unsure about how many people actually walk or cycle this route using the booklet, I think it is a very useful information guide. Although the focus is on the organisational structures, these stories are complicated with questions and also complimented with personal stories. The personal stories make the situation easier to imagine, because while you might be at the site, usually not much is left to see. The questions that are brought up encourage you to think beyond the basic story and to maybe discuss the questions with others.

Lastly, and briefly, I want to note that Camp Vught National Memorial also has some remaining buildings, related to perpetrators. However, Camp Vught National Memorial is not the owner of the former SS terrain, which is why visitors cannot go there all year or on their own. Only during the summer, there are tours every Sunday. During this tour, visitors can see some authentic buildings in which SS guards used to live or work. In contrast to Westerbork, the *Kommandantur* in Vught is still standing. In this building, you can see the exhibition *Van boven af* (From the top), about the organisation and the role of the camp leaders and employees. Sadly, while it is a professional exhibition, because it is not on the terrain of the Camp Vught National Memorial it is only open to for people who take the tour. Of course, the *Kommandantur* is a very fitting building for the exhibition,

but since not many people can now see the exhibition, it would be more productive to place it elsewhere. Lastly, the visitor can see the horse stables, and the house of the camp commander. From the balcony of the *Kommandantur*, the visitor can see the place for roll call.²²³

4.4 Tracing the Perpetrator in Material Remnants: Objects

In the previous chapter we have seen that some objects related to perpetration are presented in the exhibitions of Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork and Camp Vught National Memorial. These were small objects, and in the exhibitions, they were very much contextualised. National Monument Camp Amersfoort has no such objects in the visitor centre. However, apart from the photos inspired by Armando's concept of guilty landscape discussed in 3.2., two very telling objects are displayed in the little building on the terrain. This building is on the same place where the commander's office used to be, and here, a desk and boots are displayed. Several camp commanders have worked at this desk. After the war, the desk was taken by the Dutch authorities. Volunteers of the National Monument Camp Amersfoort rediscovered the desk this year, and now it is back where it used to be during the war, in the room that served as the camp commander's office. In this same room, camp commander's Karl Peter Berg's boots are displayed. The National Monument owns these because after the war the police forced Berg to point out where victims were buried. During one of these searches, the undertaker Antonie van Haselen told Berg to give him his boots, because those of van Haselen were too worn down to wear. In January 2013, van Haselen's son donated the boots to the National Monument.²²⁴ The room is on the terrain. To see it, you first have to enter a building and open sliding doors. While the room is on the map you can get when visiting the National Monument, there is no sign on the building. Entering the room, on the left you see the desk with a rope in front of it so

²²³ "Rondleiding SS-terrein," Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught, accessed July 2, 2018, <https://www.nmkampvught.nl/voormalig-ss-terrein/>. For this project, I have not been able to take such a tour, which makes analysis impossible.

²²⁴ Remco Reiding, "Kamp Amersfoort vindt bureau kampcommandant terug, *In beeld*, no. 48 (April 2018), 11.

you know you are not supposed to touch it. In front of you, you can see the boots, which are displayed in a glass cabinet. In the same room, a small exhibition is held on commander Karl Peter Berg. It is clear that the desk has only been there for a short period of time and that the exhibition was made on short notice to contextualise the desk, because it consists of simple cut-out print paper stuck on the wall. The exhibition centralizes camp commander Berg and is based on the research that has recently been done by a volunteer of the National Monument. It tells what he did in the camp, how (he was known to be very brutal) and what happened to him after the war. The exhibition ends with the comment that he was executed in 1949, and that he was the one that ordered the execution squad to fire. This exhibition is a case in point that for the National Monument Camp Amersfoort the representation of perpetration is a new phenomenon. It is clearly initiated by the finding of the camp commander's desk only very recently, and is therefore still quite primitive, but nevertheless this does show the willingness of the National Monument to include perpetration in their narrative.

4.5 Conclusion

All in all, the memorial centres are very slow in thematising perpetration on the former camp terrains and it seems to be linked to whether or not material remnants are left and whether the specific remnants are accessible to the memorial centres. In that sense, the thematization has less to do with pedagogical values and more with the trend of authenticity, although are of course not mutually exclusive. Camp Vught National Memorial does the least to thematise perpetration in other places than their exhibitions. On the terrain itself, nothing is done except for showing standard attributes of Nazi power such as a watch tower. The tour the visitor takes there is very much focused on commemorating and informing on the former prisoners. While there are SS buildings left, they are not accessible because they do not belong to the National Memorial. In that sense, it is good that they have managed to be able to give tours during the summer in order to give those interested an informed view of the buildings. On the terrain of the former camp Westerbork, most remnants are left in comparison to the other two camps. Apart from

some smaller materials remnants such as a bunker or grave, there is the only building left on the whole terrain, the camp commander's house. To protect it, a glass cover has been placed over it, which apart from protecting it, attracts a lot of attention. The danger that this might create a fascination for camp commander Gemmeker or the perpetrator in general is counteracted by the exhibition that is next to the house. This exhibition informs the visitor on people that lived in the house or worked in the *Kommandantur* next to it. In the near future, a new temporary exhibition is planned on Gemmeker in the context of later trials against war criminals.²²⁵ Lastly, while only a watchtower is left on the terrain of former camp Amersfoort (the building of the camp commander's boots and desk is not authentic but built later), they have found some objects that are very important. Just as the camp commander's house in Westerbork, the boots and desk risk creating a fascination for commander Berg. Again, this fascination is counteracted through the exhibition that makes clear he was a perpetrator that committed grotesque crimes.

²²⁵ Bas Kortholt, interview with author, Hooghalen, April 20, 2018.

Conclusion

With the subsidies that went to Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork in order to make a glass construction over the house of the camp commander, some people believed the government deemed perpetrator heritage more important than victim heritage. This, of course, is not the case. The memorial sites discussed in this thesis have a double function: to commemorate the victims and to inform about the history of the place. Yet, as we move further away from the Holocaust, in order to make it relevant for today's and future generations it is not enough to commemorate the victims of a faceless aggressor. Through a meaningful thematization of perpetration the visitors of the memorial sites might come to realise that the mechanisms that undermined democracy before, are still present in today's society.

In that context, this thesis has discussed how three major World War II memorial sites in the Netherlands (National Monument Camp Amersfoort, Camp Vught National Memorial, and Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork) thematise perpetration in their exhibitions and on the former campsites. In my research, I intended to find out what role the cross-medial thematization of perpetration can play in civic education with respect to the Holocaust and what the advantages as well as the problems and pitfalls can be in this context.

As discussed in chapter one, as a consequence of certain trends—identification, experience, and authenticity—in the museum and heritage industry, thematising perpetration on memorial sites is challenging. Our experience economy means that people will pay for experiences sooner than a dry informational exhibition. However, it is debatable whether experiences regarding perpetration are productive. Still, all three memorial sites have shown it is possible to create such an experience to a greater or lesser extent. The glass construction over the house of the camp commander in Westerbork stages a historical experience in the sense that it keeps the house at a distance and exciting, which is a similar feeling to the past, since hardly any of the inhabitants of the camp have ever been in or near the house. Moreover, together with the iC-ACCESS project, the Memorial Centre is

creating a 3D model of the inside of the house so that visitors do not have to go inside to see it. Camp Vught National Memorial also stages a feeling similar to the past, that of the order of the system. The room in which the exhibition on the system of National Socialism is housed is designed in such a way that you can feel the cold and the order. Thinking back of the phases of perpetrator studies, however, this design reminds us of the 1960s in which perpetrators were described in an abstract and depersonalised way. Lastly, Camp Amersfoort National Memorial is planning on creating a new permanent exhibition in which the visitor is invited to reflect on their own behaviour and the society around them based on experiences that are as of yet unclear. In other words, each of the three memorial sites has a way of combining the trend of experience with the thematization of perpetration. However, the fact that two of these ways have not been finished yet shows that this is a recent development. Furthermore, the experience in Westerbork is based on an authentic building, as are the tours given in both Westerbork and Vught. While in the combination of authenticity and perpetration care has to be taken to avoid sensationalising perpetration, the case studies have shown that this is entirely possible as long as the authentic remnants are contextualised. Lastly, possibly the most challenging trend is that of identification. All of the memorial sites centralise personal stories, however, most of those are the stories of former prisoners. This is understandable, because of the memorial sites' double function of commemorating and informing. While Vught and Westerbork both present individual perpetrators, these presentations centralise their functionality, what they were responsible before and during the war, and what happened to them afterwards, instead of fragments from their daily lives or choices they had to make. In that sense, identification with the perpetrator is avoided, since it is hard to identify with someone of whom you only know about their job. In the future plans of the memorial sites we can find a larger incorporation of this trend, because these plans focus on helping the civic education of its visitors through giving insight in the historical situation, but also on personal choices that were made.

The second chapter has discussed the documentary exhibitions in Westerbork, Vught, and Amersfoort. Here, I have argued that the memorial sites have been slow to incorporate perpetration in their exhibitions. While Vught and Westerbork thematise

perpetration, which is a first step, the thematization is often not done adequately enough. In Vught, the first exhibition room discusses perpetration in an unrepresentative way and exculpates a large part of the Dutch society. The second room, which focuses on the system, is much more adequate because it uses a variety of techniques and approaches. Yet, in this room whether the message comes across or not entirely depends on what pillars you look at. On the other hand, the more recent exhibitions and the plans for future exhibitions show much more willingness to incorporate perpetration in the presentations. Barracks 1B does not centralise perpetration but the place itself, a large part of the people that were in the internment camp were perpetrators. Moreover, the exhibition opens up the discussion on the later generations of people that have lived in the camp, which is something that is only very recently done. Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork is the most progressive in this sense. I have discussed the exhibition *The Guards of Westerbork*, and as a consequence of their collaboration with the iC-ACCESS research project, more presentations, in several forms are on the way. A 3D model is being made for the house of the camp commander, a new temporary exhibition on Gemmeke's trial and other trials is being made, and a tour past contested spaces of the camp has already been made.

Finally, in the last chapter I discussed the thematization of perpetration of the terrains of the former camps. Generally, these terrains centralise the commemoration of the victims. Each terrain has several monuments for this purpose. Thematization of perpetration seems to be linked to the material remnants that are left. Both Vught and Westerbork organise tours past or in buildings and other remnants associated with perpetration. Vught is only able to do so on Sundays during the Summer, because the buildings are on the terrain of a military base. Furthermore, Westerbork started to thematise perpetration around the camp commander's house, for which a conserving construction was built in 2015. Amersfoort has no buildings left, but has recently found the camp commander's desk, which, together with his boots is now housed in a little room built on the place where his office was. Both the camp commander's house and boots and desk risk fascination, but this is counteracted through informational presentations that are built around it.

The three case studies have illustrated how perpetration is thematised in Dutch war museums, but are also an illustration of the dilemmas discussed in the first chapter. From this thesis, it has become clear that increasingly, the answer to the question whether we should try to understand World War II perpetrators is yes. Of the permanent exhibitions discussed I would say that only the room with the pillars in Vught actually adds to our understanding of perpetration, since it tries to illustrate the effects of propaganda and explains that perpetrators were ordinary men. However, the more recent exhibitions in Vught and Westerbork already do more to at least let their visitors reflect on perpetration. Lastly, the future plans are very clear about the answer. In order to make the history of the places relevant for the present and future, we need to try to understand perpetration, because then we might see that the mechanisms that lead to it are still present today. Related to this, the memorial sites generally have to work between two extremes in the presentation of perpetration: demonization and humanization. The memorial sites' presentations generally are somewhere in the middle. The exhibitions discussed generally do not demonise perpetrators, except for the first exhibition room in Vught. However, except for the exhibition in Barracks 1B they also have not really succeeded to humanise the perpetrators that are presented, because mostly, no biographical information is given other than birth date or place and functions related to the war. In Barracks 1B one of the goals is to humanise the people discussed, since it centralises the effects of having been interned on individuals. Moreover, on the camp terrain of Westerbork the larger focus on the camp commander's house humanises Gemmeker, the camp commander who lived there. A last dilemma that was discussed in chapter one is what photographs to use. On the one hand, depicting the perpetrators in uniform shows them as they are talked about, in function. On the other hand, when showing them in uniform, a sign of their later defeat is needed in order to avoid depicting them as they wanted to be seen. Most of the pictures used for the exhibitions are indeed of perpetrators wearing a uniform. Another common type is the portrait. Apart from illustrating who the person in the explanatory panel is, the portrait makes sure visitors are not allowed the comfortable feeling of a far-away anonymous perpetrator, the portrait humanises the perpetrator.

Lastly, the three case studies have illustrated the ways to thematise and describe perpetration discussed by Jelitzki and Wetzel, which I discussed in the first chapter. Every thematization of perpetration I have discussed has, probably unsurprisingly, at least in part focussed on the local history and people related to the site. The focus on organisational structures mainly came back in *The Guards of Westerbork*, the outside version of this exhibition, and *If Walls Could Speak* (Barracks 1B). However, other exhibitions also touched on the organisational structures. Presently, I would not say that the thematization of perpetration on the three memorial sites centralises teaching about human rights and democratic values. However, on the whole, these are important lessons that can be learned in the places and the future plans of all of the three sites seem to focus much more on this. To describe perpetration or perpetrators, the sites rely on personal biographies less than on the functional descriptions relating to the organisation of the Holocaust. Moreover, only Vught illustrates how the ideology behind the system worked in an adequate way. What is lacking in all exhibitions and also on the terrains is the thematization of choice. While it is difficult to show why individuals acted in a certain way, it is possible to use a variety of accounts to illustrate the scope of action. Again, the three sites are all in the process of renewing their exhibitions and in these exhibitions the scope of action will hopefully be emphasised in a more adequate way. Together, the case studies illustrate the different ways memorial site pedagogy can be practiced.

This thesis could only give a limited analysis based on the exhibitions and the current status of the former campsites. Indeed, a limitation of this study is that the effect on the visitor might be different than intended. Since I chose to use discourse analysis as my methodology and primarily based my analysis on close reading texts, photos, videos, design, and interviews with people involved in the places, the information I gathered mainly provided a perspective on how the presentations were intended. The methods of reception studies could have given a clearer image of what the actual effects of the presentations are on the intended public. Unfortunately, these methods were beyond the capacities and scope of this thesis.

Furthermore, as Erik Somers shows, there are enough interesting case studies from the Dutch context that could be taken into account in further research. In 2013, eighteen officially registered museums centralised the Second World War in their presentation.²²⁶ In his research, he has divided them in five categories: 1) war and occupation, 2) resistance and occupation, 3) (Jewish) persecution and terror, 4) military, battle, and liberation, 5) the Dutch-Indies.²²⁷ The three case studies discussed here all fall into the third category, so it would be productive to also consider museums from the other categories. Moreover, within the case studies itself there are possibilities for further research. This thesis has only focused on the exhibitions and the terrain of the former camps, other options include looking at the thematization of perpetration in educational materials, guided tours, activities organised by the memorial sites, and a larger focus on activities and materials concerning the Moluccan period of the camps. Moreover, a broader field of the Dutch memory culture could be taken into account. For instance, recently quite a lot of Dutch series and films that thematise World War II perpetration have been released, such as *De val van Aantjes* (2013), *Riphagen* (2016), and *De zaak Menten* (2016). Finally, comparative studies on an international level could help in finding out more about what role the thematization of perpetration can play in civic education with regards to the Holocaust.

The analysis of the three sites has shown that the thematization of perpetration is still very much in development. Although this thesis is limited to the musealisation of three former camp sites, the intention has been to provide a position from which to complicate and think further about the thematization of perpetrators and perpetration in the Netherlands.

²²⁶ Somers, *Oorlog in het museum*, 37.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

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